United Nations

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General Assembly

Fifty-first session

First Committee

2nd Meeting
Thursday, 10 October 1996, 10.00 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: I should like at the outset to express my profound appreciation to all Members of the United Nations for the honour and privilege they have conferred upon me and my country by electing me as Chairman of this body. I thank you all most warmly for the confidence that you have placed in me. It will be my endeavour to conduct the work of this important body of the General Assembly in a manner that will measure up to your confidence.

Permit me to express my sincere appreciation for the very kind words offered by Ambassador Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations, when he nominated me at the first meeting of the Committee. I request him kindly to convey, on behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf, our sincere gratitude to my predecessor, Ambassador Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, for the skilful and effective manner in which he presided over the proceedings of the Committee last year, as well as for his significant contribution to the results achieved by the First Committee during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Acknowledging that the tasks assigned to the First Committee are not easy, I will count on your complete and invaluable cooperation in dealing with them. I, for my part, will always be available to assist delegations in the work of the Committee. It is gratifying to know that I can also count on the most valuable experience, competence and profound knowledge of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Marrack Goulding; the Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Prvoslav Davinič; and the Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, and his colleagues. On behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf, I warmly welcome Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung and his colleagues to the Committee. I am sure that the Committee will benefit from their experience, and we look forward to their support in dealing with the many pressing issues confronting us.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf, our heartfelt thanks and special gratitude to the outgoing Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, for the exemplary manner in which he has guided the work of the Committee at all stages over the past few years. His wide knowledge and experience in the field of disarmament and his professional attitude have proved to be of great benefit to all members of the Committee. I wish him a very happy and prosperous retirement.

Election of the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur

The Chairman: I wish to recall the decision of the General Assembly, taken at its 1935th meeting on 22 September 1971, concerning the election procedure with regard to officers of the Main Committees of the General Assembly. In accordance with that decision, nominations of candidates should be limited to one statement for each candidate, after which the Committee should immediately proceed to the election. The First Committee will, therefore, follow that procedure today.

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Mr. Meier-Klodt (Germany): Allow me at the outset, Mr. Chairman, to welcome you warmly as Chairman of the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. My delegation has always taken a particularly keen interest in the proceedings of this Committee. We are aware of its opportunities and also of the obstacles that sometimes have to be overcome. On behalf of my entire delegation, I would therefore like to pledge our full support to your endeavours. We are also delighted to see Mr. Daviniĉ and his colleagues who are, as always, ably conducting our affairs. In particular I welcome our new Secretary, Mr. Lin.

On behalf of Ambassador Hoffmann, the Vice-Chairman of the First Committee at the fiftieth session, I now have the honour to nominate Ambassador André Mernier of Belgium as his successor as Vice-Chairman during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

Ambassador Mernier has been the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva since September 1996. From 1994 to 1996 he headed the Disarmament Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels. Ambassador Mernier joined the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1975, and has served successively in Amsterdam and Beirut, as a Belgian representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in Washington, East Berlin and West Berlin and as Ambassador to Seoul.

Obviously, Ambassador Mernier is a very experienced diplomat with a professional profile well suited to this Committee. We will be very pleased to see Ambassador Mernier by your side, Mr. Chairman, as Vice-Chairman of the First Committee, as, I hope, will the entire membership.

The Chairman: I thank the distinguished representative of Germany for nominating Ambassador André Mernier of Belgium for the post of Vice-Chairman. I appreciate the friendly remarks he deemed it proper to address to me. I wish to convey, through him, the Committee's appreciation to Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann for his invaluable contribution to the work of the Committee in his capacity as Vice-Chairman at the fiftieth session.

There being no other nomination, I take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and with established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and declare Ambassador André Mernier of Belgium elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I now call upon the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Albín (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First of all I should like to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation, our congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We wish you every success in your work. You can of course count on the full support of the Mexican delegation.

On behalf of Ambassador Antonio de Icaza, Vice-Chairman of this Committee at the fiftieth session, I wish to say that it is an honour and a privilege to propose the candidacy of Ambassador Andelfo García for election to the post of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee at this session. Ambassador Andelfo García has been the Deputy Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations since 1994. In the Foreign Ministry of his country, he has held the posts of Deputy Minister for the Americas and Sovereign Territories and Deputy Minister for International Political Affairs. Ambassador García graduated in law from the National University of Colombia and has a masters degree in Latin American and Caribbean Affairs from New York University. Ambassador García has vast academic experience in the areas of public and private international law. He has been a professor and researcher and has held important academic and administrative positions in prestigious universities in his country.

Those of us who have been fortunate enough to know and work with him have been able to appreciate Ambassador García's talents, skills, tact and great capacity for work, as well as his outstanding personal qualities. For these reasons, it is a privilege for me to nominate Ambassador García for the post of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee and recommend his election by acclamation.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement nominating Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia for the post of Vice-Chairman. Reflecting the sentiments of all the members of the Committee, I request him to communicate to Ambassador Antonio de Icaza the Committee's appreciation for his valuable contribution to the work of the Committee in his capacity as Committee Vice-Chairman at the last session of the General Assembly.

There being no other nomination, I take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and with established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Ambassador Andelfo García elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to express to the two Vice-Chairmen my warmest congratulations on the distinction that has been conferred upon them and assure them of my utmost support and cooperation in the joint discharge of the responsibility incumbent upon us.

I now call upon the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Sukayri (Jordan): At the outset allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee. I am confident that your qualifications, long experience and diplomatic skills will undoubtedly help you in successfully leading the deliberations on the items on our agenda throughout this session.

I should also like to commend His Excellency Ambassador Erdenechuluun and my colleagues who were members of the Bureau during the fiftieth session for their dedication and the marvellous work they achieved. I express my gratitude to Mr. Davinič, Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, and welcome our new Secretary, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, and his colleagues.

As the Rapporteur at the fiftieth session, I have the honour and privilege to nominate our colleague Mr. Parfait-Serge Onanga Anyanga of Gabon to assume the rapporteurship of the First Committee at the fifty-first session. Mr. Onanga Anyanga received his *diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées* from the University of Paris, in sociology. He also obtained a diploma in public administration, and as a counsellor at his country's Foreign Ministry Mr. Onanga-Anyanga assumed the position of Chief of the United Nations section and Cabinet Director of the Ministry of Environment. In August 1993 Mr. Onanga-Anyanga was appointed First Counsellor at the Gabonese Mission to the United Nations in New York, with special responsibilities for political and disarmament affairs, and he followed the deliberations of both the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. In 1994 Mr. Onanga-Anyanga participated in the United Nations disarmament programme, where he had the opportunity to familiarize himself with the different aspects of disarmament questions. Mr. Onanga-Anyanga has participated in various seminars and workshops dealing with peace and international security. Finally, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga is preparing a doctoral thesis at the University of Paris on the proliferation of conventional arms in Africa.

In view of his impressive qualifications, talents and long experience, I wish to nominate Mr. Onanga-Anayanga for the post of Rapporteur of the First Committee at the fifty-first session. I am confident that Mr. Onanga-Anyanga will be able to carry out his responsibilities most efficiently. I wish him and the other members of the Bureau every success under your guidance, Mr. Chairman, and I would also like to assure one and all of my delegation's fullest cooperation and support.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Jordan for nominating Mr. Onanga-Anyanga of Gabon for the post of Rapporteur of the First Committee. I trust that I am expressing the sentiments of the entire membership of the Committee when I extend our gratitude to Mr. Rajab Sukayri, who served as Rapporteur of the Committee and so ably carried out the task during the last session of the Committee.

We have just heard the representative of Jordan nominate Mr. Onanga-Anyanga of Gabon for the post of Rapporteur. There being no other nominations, I shall take it that Committee wishes again to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Onanga-Anyanga elected Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to express my cordial congratulations to the representative of Gabon upon his election as Rapporteur of the First Committee, and I invite him to take the place reserved for him at the podium.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the members of the First Committee to rule 110 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which reads as follows:

> "Congratulations to the officers of a Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session — or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation — after all the officers of the Committee have been elected."

Accordingly, I shall now call upon the representative of Mongolia, Ambassador Enkhsaikhan, who will speak on behalf of Ambassador Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, Chairman of the First Committee at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): On behalf of Ambassador Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, Chairman of the First Committee at the last session of the General Assembly, it gives me great pleasure to extend his and my own heartfelt congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, as well as to the newly elected members of the Bureau of the First Committee. I am sure that under your guidance, Mr. Andelfo García of Columbia, Mr. André Mernier of Belgium — elected as Vice-Chairmen — and Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Gabon, elected as Rapporteur of the Committee — given their distinguished diplomatic skills and experience, coupled with the cooperation of Member States — will discharge their duties with remarkable success and make their contributions to furthering the work of this Committee.

We are commencing the activities of our Committee at a time when disarmament and international security issues are high on the agenda of the international community and when the future course of negotiations in the field is being determined.

Though we have to admit that considerable differences still exist among delegations on various issues, nevertheless there is general commitment to moving forward to implement the lofty goals of disarmament and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free, tension-free, conflict-free world, and to working out widely acceptable solutions to the pressing issues of the day.

In this spirit, I would like to wish you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau, every success in your new posts and to assure you of our full cooperation.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Belgium, Mr. Philippe Roland.

Mr. Roland (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to speak on behalf of Ambassador Mernier, the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, who has instructed me to thank members for the confidence which this Assembly has decided to confer upon him with the Vice-Chairmanship of the First Committee together with Ambassador Andelfo García. He would like to congratulate Ambassador Sychou, Permanent Representative of Belarus, for assuming the important function of Chairman of the First Committee and to assure him of his full cooperation.

Ambassador Mernier will endeavour to make himself as available as possible throughout this important session, so that his work may be pursued in a constructive and harmonious way. He has no doubt that the subject matter to be dealt with is of the greatest importance to the international community in the field of disarmament, which will make his task all the more demanding. He will endeavour to deserve the confidence of all delegations present here.

The Chairman: I now call upon the representative of Columbia, Ambassador Andelfo García.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish at the outset to convey my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee at the current session. We are certain that, under your guidance, the work of the Committee will be crowned with success. At the same time, I wish to express my most sincere appreciation to my friend, the representative of Mexico, Ambassador Gustavo Albin, for his kind words and to all representatives who today have honoured me by electing me Vice-Chairman of the First Committee. We are firmly committed to working in a friendly manner to ensure that the Committee will move forward in its deliberations and conclude its work successfully.

The Chairman: I look forward to the active cooperation and support of the representative of Colombia, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, in the discharge of my various responsibilities.

I now call on the representative of Gabon, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, Rapporteur of the First Committee.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): Permit me first to convey to you, Sir, the warm congratulations of the Gabonese delegation on your brilliant election to the chairmanship of the First Committee of the General Assembly. We are persuaded that your long experience and your perfect familiarity with the matters to be discussed are guaranties of the successful outcome of our deliberations. Our thanks also go to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, for the outstanding way in which he conducted our work last year. We also wish to express our thanks to all the outgoing Bureau, particularly to Mr. Rajab Sukayri of Jordan.

We also congratulate the other newly elected members of the Bureau, as well as to our new Secretary, Mr. Lin, and his team.

May I also address the gratitude of the Gabonese delegation to the Committee for having been kind enough to elect me to the rapporteurship of the present session of this Committee. Rest assured, Sir, that the Gabonese delegation and I will always be ready to contribute to the successful conduct of our work as well as to the success of your important mission.

The Chairman: I appreciate the Rapporteur's willingness to work closely with me and the other officers of the Committee. I am certain that I express not only my own sentiments, but also those of the two Vice-Chairmen, when I say that we shall work closely with him during the current session.

The Committee has concluded the consideration of the first item on its agenda.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I draw the attention of members of the Committee to document A/C.1/51/1 containing a letter dated 20 September 1996 addressed to me by the President of the General Assembly informing me that the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting had decided to allocate agenda items 60 to 81 inclusive to the First Committee for its consideration.

Before proceeding to the proposed programme of work and time-table as contained in document A/C.1/51/CRP.1, I wish to recall that at the open-ended informal meeting of the First Committee held on 8 October 1996 the Committee tentatively reached agreement, albeit on a referendum basis, on its programme of work and time-table for this session. Nevertheless, I should like to offer some explanations before providing a full account of the proposed programme of work and timetable.

Members will recall that, in accordance with established practice, the First Committee commences its substantive work only after the conclusion of the general debate in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly. Moreover, the President of the General Assembly appealed to the Chairman of the Main Committees of the General Assembly to conclude the work of the Committees by Friday, 29 November 1996, in order to enable the plenary of the Assembly to consider the reports of the Main Committees during the early part of December. Accordingly, as I indicated at the informal meeting, we should organize our programme in such a manner as to conclude the work of the First Committee by 27 November 1996, at the latest.

These parameters leave the First Committee with a period extending from Monday, 14 October, to Wednesday, 27 November, giving us a total of 33 working days in which the Committee could hold a maximum of 36 meetings, provided the requisite conference services are available. I believe that if we make a genuine and concerted effort to fully, efficiently and effectively utilize the conference facilities available to us, the Committee can accomplish its tasks without any undue difficulties. Taking into account all questions of timing and the Organization's acute financial exigencies, I hope that every effort will be made to avoid night and weekend meetings.

To recapitulate, the proposed programme of work and time-table has been prepared after taking into account the various useful initiatives that have evolved during the past several years. Consequently, I have tried to devise a programme of work and time-table based on the following proposals. The First Committee will begin its substantive session by holding a short general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items: item 61 and items 63 to 81. A total of 10 meetings — from Monday, 14 October, to Thursday, 24 October — will be allocated for that purpose. In this regard, I should like to urge delegations to kindly limit the time for delivery of their statements, if possible, to 15 minutes in order to enable all those members of the Committee wishing to participate in the general debate to do so within the short period of time devoted for that purpose.

I should like also to invite those delegations wishing to participate in the general debate to kindly inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible in order to enable the Committee to fully and constructively utilize the time and resources available to it. Furthermore, it should be noted that the deadline for the closure of the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items will be Monday, 14 October, at 6 p.m.

From Monday, 28 October, to Thursday, 31 October, the First Committee will hold informal structured discussions on specific subjects on the adopted thematic approach on disarmament and related international security agenda items. A total of five meetings will be set aside for this stage of work of the Committee. Exactly the same number of meetings was used by the Committee last year.

In this connection, I should like to inform members that I and the Officers of the Committee, with the assistance and cooperation of the Secretariat, will provide the necessary information to members of the Committee well in advance regarding each subject and the time allocated for its consideration.

Thereafter, the First Committee will proceed to the next stage of its work: the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under disarmament and related international security agenda items. With regard to this phase of the work of the Committee, a period from Friday, 1 November, to Thursday, 7 November — a total of seven meetings — will be allocated for this stage of the work of the Committee.

The deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on all disarmament and related international security agenda items will be Tuesday, 29 October, at 6 p.m. It is my intention to request the cooperation of members in adhering strictly to that deadline. Delegations are strongly encouraged to submit and introduce their draft resolutions as early as possible. Furthermore, it is imperative for delegations to submit those draft resolutions that could entail programme budget implications as early as possible in order to enable the Secretariat to prepare the necessary statement of programme budget implications on time. It would also enable the Committee to take action on them with a view to meeting the mandatory deadline required for their submission to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. In this regard, I would like to indicate that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee need adequate time to review the programme budget implications of a draft resolution before the latter can be acted upon by the Assembly.

Subsequently, during the period from Friday, 8 November, to Monday, 18 November, the First Committee will proceed to take action on all draft resolutions submitted under disarmament and related international security agenda items. A total of 10 meetings will be at the disposal of the Committee for that stage of its work.

In this connection, I would like to indicate that it is my intention to retain, as was the practice in past years, the voting procedure of grouping draft resolutions by clusters at the current session of the General Assembly, and I shall present specific proposals concerning this in due course.

Finally, based on the logic of combining disarmament and related international security agenda items, as warranted, item 62, entitled "The question of Antarctica", would have to be dealt with during the latter part of the Committee's session. With respect to that agenda item, three meetings have been allocated for the general debate and consideration of and action on draft resolutions submitted under the item, from Monday, 25 November, to Tuesday, 26 November.

The deadline for submission of draft resolutions under item 62 on "The question of Antarctica" will be Monday, 18 November, at 6 p.m., in order to facilitate the Committee's work.

On the basis of the proposed programme of work and timetable that I have just briefly outlined, the First Committee should be able to conclude consideration of all the agenda items allocated to it within the time-frame I have set forth. It is my earnest hope that this programme of work and timetable, which was arrived at after due consultations and following past precedent, will meet with the approval of members of the Committee.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the First Committee adopts the programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.1/51/CRP.1.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should now like to draw the attention of members of the Committee to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly affecting the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in General Assembly decision 34/401.

In order to utilize the time and conference resources available to the Committee efficiently and fully, I should like, with your cooperation and assistance, to convene the meetings of the Committee at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. sharp, and I would adjourn the meetings at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., respectively. Allow me to emphasize the importance of punctuality in the interest of ensuring an effective and orderly organization of our work and achieving economies for the Organization.

At the same time, I wish to point out that I shall convene meetings of the First Committee only if there is a sufficient number of speakers inscribed on the list of speakers to address the Committee in order to enable us fully to use the time and conference facilities available in the most efficient and effective manner possible. I would like to add that resources allocated to a meeting cancelled at an appropriate time may be released for other meetings held within or outside the framework of the First Committee.

In this connection, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly the First Committee lost 38 hours and 5 minutes owing to late starting and early ending of meetings and that it had a utilization factor of 64 per cent, which is below the benchmark figure of 80 per cent established by the Committee on Conferences in 1993.

I would therefore like to urge members of the Committee once again to cooperate with me in order to enable us to make the most efficient use possible of available conference resources, particularly during the current session, when the demand for conference facilities and services is again expected to be brisk.

In this respect, I would like to draw the attention of members of the Committee to the text of a letter dated 6 September from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to me, which has been issued as a document of the Committee (A/C.1/51/2).

I would also like to inform you that I have received a letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences informing me that the Committee on Conferences, at its recent substantive session of 1996, considered an item on unedited verbatim transcripts, which were used for the first time by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its thirty-ninth session last June. During the discussion on the matter, the view was expressed that, while such transcripts were not an ideal solution, they could be issued and corrected more speedily than verbatim and summary records and appeared to be a satisfactory, cost-efficient measure. It was felt that it would be useful to have a thorough cost analysis of written meeting records and of unedited transcripts. The view was also expressed that unedited transcripts, which were still being used on an experimental basis at Vienna, were of doubtful benefit. Delegations there had yet to make recommendations about the change in records.

However, it was felt that it would be useful to inform bodies entitled to written meeting records about the cost benefits that might derive from using unedited transcripts and encourage them to request such transcripts at one meeting on an experimental basis to supplement their usual records. The Secretariat assured the Committee on Conferences that such an experiment could be absorbed within existing resources.

The Chairman of the Committee on Conferences was informed by the Secretariat that the notional cost of a verbatim record is $14,900, that of a summary record is $6,976, and that of an unedited transcript is $2,600. Unedited transcripts would thus appear to be the most cost-effective of the three type of record.

In its conclusions and recommendations on the matter, the Committee on Conferences requested its Chairman to transmit a letter to the chairmen of intergovernmental bodies that receive written meeting records to advise them of the information contained in paragraphs 1 to 3 that I have just brought to your attention.

The Committee on Conferences also requested its Chairman to invite those bodies to consider the possibility of requesting the Secretariat to issue unedited transcripts of one meeting for comparison purposes with a view to the possible substitution of such transcripts for their usual records in the future. In this connection, I would like to propose to the Committee that the eighth meeting of the First Committee, which will be held on Friday, 18 October, at 3 p.m., be selected for the suggested experimental purposes in order to allow the Secretariat to issue the unedited transcripts of that meeting for comparison.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly.

It was so decided.

I therefore request the Secretariat to issue the unedited transcripts of the eighth meeting of the Committee, which will be convened on Friday, 18 October, at 3 p.m.

Last but not least, I would like to inform you that I have received a letter, dated 26 September 1996, from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee regarding a proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, which is contained in document A/51/6. The proposed programme concerning the First Committee is contained in Programme 1 of the medium-term plan for 1998-2001, as set out in document A/51/6 (Prog. 1).

The letter from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be issued as a document soon. I invite members of the Committee to kindly submit their comments or views in writing on Programme 1 of the aforementioned medium-term plan by Wednesday, 16 October 1996. In this connection, I would like to inform the Committee that the Fifth Committee intends to begin its consideration of the item on programme planning on Monday, 21 October. If I do not receive any comments by Wednesday, 16 October, I will consider that the First Committee has taken note of the contents of the document that I referred to earlier and that there are no views or comments that the Committee wishes to transmit on the subject. Accordingly, I will transmit an appropriate communication to that effect to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee.

I would now like to give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee to make a statement.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): I would like, with the indulgence of the members of the Committee, to draw the attention of the Committee to the following points concerning the organization of work. First, the General Assembly has decided to depart during the fifty-first session, once again, from the rule that one quarter of the members must be present before a meeting of a Main Committee may be declared open and debate permitted to proceed. The General Assembly made this recommendation on the understanding that such a departure from the rules did not involve any permanent change in the relevant provisions of rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure, pertaining to the opening of meetings, whereby a majority of members must be present for any decision to be taken.

Secondly, as indicated in the programme of work and timetable, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items will be closed on Monday, 14 October, at 6 p.m. A number of delegations have already indicated their intention to participate in the general debate, and the Secretariat has taken note of those requests. In order to enable the First Committee to make full use of the time and conference facilities available to it, all those delegations wishing to participate in the general debate are requested kindly to inscribe their names on the list of speakers at their earliest convenience. In this regard, delegations are requested to provide a minimum of 30 copies of all prepared statements to the conference officers for conference servicing purposes.

Thirdly, I would like to appeal to members of the Committee to submit draft resolutions, especially draft resolutions that have programme budget implications, as far in advance as possible in order to allow sufficient time for the preparation by the Secretariat of the cost estimates and for the draft resolutions' consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, as well as to provide enough time for consultations. This would undoubtedly make it easier for the Secretariat to process the draft resolutions so as to make them available to the Committee as soon as possible.

Fourthly, in connection with draft resolutions and conference rooms, I request members of the Committee to note that draft resolutions, amendments and the names of sponsors thereof should be submitted to the Secretariat in writing to ensure accuracy and avoid any possible misunderstanding. Requests for the use of conference rooms for group meetings should also be submitted in writing as early as possible so that the necessary arrangements can be made in time.

Fifthly, I would also like to draw the attention of members of the Committee to General Assembly decision 34/401, and particularly to its provisions dealing with the explanation of vote and the exercise of the right of reply, namely paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of that decision, which pertain to those issues.

Sixthly, with regard to documentation, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to General Assembly resolution 50/206 C of 23 December 1995, in which the Assembly adopted several measures on the control and limitation of documentation. In this regard, I wish to read out operative paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of that resolution, which call for action by United Nations bodies:

> "6. *Requests* members of all bodies to exercise restraint in making proposals containing requests for new reports";
>
> "7. *Invites* all bodies to consider the possibility of biennializing or triennializing the presentation of reports, to review the necessity of all recurrent documents with a view to streamlining documentation and contributing to savings and to make appropriate recommendations";
>
> "8. *Encourages* members of intergovernmental bodies:
>
> *(a)* To consider the possibility of requesting oral reports, without prejudice to the provision of information to delegations in all the official languages;
>
> *(b)* To request consolidated reports on related topics under a single item or sub-item where appropriate and cost-effective."

In this connection, I would like to point out that, under operative paragraph 11 of the same resolution, the

General Assembly has requested the Secretary-General to present to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a report on the implementation of the measures spelled out in that resolution, including information on possible savings.

With regard to the documentation of the First Committee, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to document A/C.1/51/INF.1, which will be issued within a few days. This document will list, for the purpose of information and ready reference, all documents before the First Committee issued as of 14 October 1996. That list will be updated as appropriate.

Finally, I would like to ask delegations to be so kind as to submit to the Secretariat as soon as possible the list of members of their delegations to the First Committee in order to enable the Secretariat to circulate the Committee's membership list at the earliest possible time.

The Chairman: I would like to inform the members of the Committee that the Secretary-General of the United Nations will address the Committee at its first substantive meeting on Monday, 14 October. I urge all delegations to be punctual.

As decided, the First Committee will begin its substantive work on Monday, 14 October, at 10 a.m. sharp.

Mr. Rivero Rosario (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I apologize for taking the floor at this stage, but I shall be extremely brief.

When our delegation speaks in the general debate, it will convey its congratulations to you, Sir, and to the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur. At this stage, however, I wish to convey to all of them our readiness to cooperate with them.

I wish to make only one comment. If my delegation has understood correctly, we will be considering the matter of unedited transcripts on Friday, 18 October. My delegation believes that this is certainly an important question.

However, we have heard that, in the letter of the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, which will be issued at a later date, he asks the First Committee to consider the medium-term plan on disarmament, which will affect the direction of the Organization between 1998 and 2001. My delegation understood that Wednesday, 16 October had been set as the deadline to receive the views of delegations.

In this connection, we are obviously surprised to learn that we will be considering the question of records — a matter of crucial importance — at a meeting of the Committee, whereas on this other question we will be limited to the individual views of delegations rather than assigning a meeting for a debate on this important matter, as my delegation requested during informal consultations.

In view of this, my delegation suggests and requests that the Bureau consider at its first meeting the appropriate time for us to devote a meeting to discussing this important matter, and that it make a proposal to us in that regard at Monday's meeting.

The Chairman: I now call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): With regard to the question raised by the representative of Cuba regarding unedited transcripts, I would like to say that this issue concerns a kind of comparison between the unedited transcript records and the official verbatim records. This issue actually has nothing to do with the medium-term plan at all, but rather is for the sake of future reference in considering how to implement them.

Mrs. Arce (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The fifty-first session of the General Assembly will have to take a decision on the medium-term plan of the United Nations for the period 1998-2001. My delegation believes that this will be one of the most important issues on which all Member States will have to give their views, since, as we know, the next proposed budgets for the bienniums 1998-1999 and 2000-2001 will be developed on the basis of what is adopted in the medium-term plan.

The authorities of my country have reviewed in great detail the proposal in Programme 1, which deals with political matters and encompasses the matter of disarmament. It is my country's view that a more detailed examination should be undertaken by the Main Committee, which addresses disarmament issues.

In that regard, my delegation believes that it would be advisable to have at least one working meeting of the First Committee at which delegations could express their points of view and, more importantly, make known their priorities in terms of what should be the guidelines of our Organization on disarmament issues.

While we take note of the proposal you have made, Sir, that delegations should be able to submit their comments in writing, we believe that it is precisely because of the importance of disarmament and the manner in which it will be reflected in the work of the Organization over the next four years that our Committee should devote at least one working meeting to an exchange of views on this point.

Furthermore, my delegation understands that a similar decision has been taken by other Committees of the General Assembly. In that regard, we will await the decision of the Bureau of our Committee.

Mr. Zaluar (Brazil): First of all, I would like to pledge the support of our delegation for all the efforts of the Chairman of the First Committee. I would also like to support the statements made by the representatives of Mexico and Cuba. Since we took part in consideration of the medium-term plan, we also understood that the Committees in general, and this Committee in particular, would take a closer look at the relevant sessions of the medium-term plan. We think that this should be one of our top priorities and that at least one session, as previous speakers have proposed, should be dedicated to an open-ended discussion between delegations on that subject.

Since the Fifth Committee is going to begin discussing this issue on 21 October, perhaps I might suggest that one of the sessions that is currently dedicated to the general debate might be allotted to this question. If this proves to be impossible, then I might suggest that during the structured discussion we should go for an in-depth discussion of this aspect of disarmament machinery, that is to say, the medium-term plan programme on disarmament. We think, as the President of the General Assembly put it so well, that we should not carry on with business as usual but try to be more result-oriented in the work of the General Assembly and in the work of the Main Committees in particular. We think that this is one example where a more result-oriented and more concrete discussions would perhaps lead to much better results in our work.

Although we have made these suggestions, but we would welcome with great satisfaction any suggestions that the Chairman, in consultation with the Secretariat, might make to enable the First Committee to hold a discussion on this subject.

The Chairman: I would like to inform the members of the Committee that, concerning the question that has been raised by the delegations of Cuba, Mexico and Brazil, I will consult with members of the Bureau and inform the Committee of the result of my consultations. I would like to assure the Committee that we will find the appropriate time for consideration of this very important issue.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

United Nations A/C.1/51/PV.3

General Assembly
Fifty-first session
First Committee
3rd Meeting
Monday, 14 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Sychou . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Statement by the Secretary-General

The Chairman: On behalf of the Committee, it is my great pleasure and honour to warmly welcome His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, who has kindly agreed to address the Committee on the opening day of our substantive work.

The Secretary-General: I should like first to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to this important position. I know that you will bring to your new responsibilities the same keen sense of diplomacy and creative compromise that has distinguished your career. Under your able chairmanship, the First Committee is assured of making swift progress on the urgent issues on its agenda.

It is a great pleasure for me to address the First Committee so soon after the successful adoption and signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Speaker after speaker in the General Assembly over the last three weeks defined the Treaty as a landmark and as an important step towards complete nuclear disarmament. The Test-Ban Treaty adds to the stockpile of political and legal instruments that can help us ward off the threat of nuclear self-destruction that has been hanging over our heads for more than 50 years.

Here in this building, which symbolizes the collective will of the community of nations, I had the honour to open the Treaty for signature a little more than three weeks ago. The United Nations, which offers its Member States an institutionalized framework for dialogue, negotiation and collaboration on issues of global significance and universal impact, takes legitimate pride in having made that event possible.

On behalf of today's children and tomorrow's generations, I commend the work of the many men and women in public and private life who prepared the ground for this historic achievement. The political and technical work of the Conference on Disarmament, which led to the complex draft text of the Treaty and its detailed verification protocols, was a major accomplishment. The fact that the draft enjoyed the international community's overwhelming support is a tribute to the unique capacity of the Conference. How else could such a complex multilateral disarmament treaty attract 123 signatures and one ratification in such a short time? How else could such sophisticated arrangements for verifying compliance with the Treaty's provisions have been developed?

No mention of the Treaty should be made without paying a special tribute to Ambassador Jaap Ramaker's firm and skilled guidance of the Ad Hoc Committee. Without his exceptional energy, patience and ability to win compromises, I doubt that so much progress could have been made in so little time on such a complex issue. From the very start of the negotiations, the main objective of many non-nuclear-weapon States was to build into the architecture of the Treaty a renewed commitment by all States, and particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to a progressive and more systematic process leading to complete — I repeat, complete — nuclear disarmament. The conclusion of the Test-Ban Treaty has increased the momentum towards nuclear disarmament.

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Great expectations have arisen that international security and stability can be assured at the same time that movement towards nuclear disarmament can be accelerated. The race to nuclear disengagement and disarmament should become as relentless as was the nuclear arms race during the cold war. Now, in the closing years of the twentieth century, the question should be: What are the next steps towards a secure and stable twenty-first century without nuclear weapons and without weapons of mass destruction?

Ideas from prestigious sources have added recently to a sense of urgency regarding nuclear disarmament. I refer in particular to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, issued in July, on whether the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons was permitted under any circumstances under international law. While some aspects of the Court's opinion may be controversial, it has raised the issue to a new legal level. The judges ruled that there existed

> "an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". *(A/51/4, para. 182)*

This is a new and significant way of perceiving commitments to disarmament negotiations. The Court's opinion has captured, in my view, the understanding of the obligations assumed by States Parties under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This understanding also applies to the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, adopted in 1995. The implication is that negotiations will lead to the conclusion of agreements. My hope is that all States will extract from this particular aspect of the Court's opinion the incentive to strive to take concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

At the macro level, the international community cannot lower its guard. The destructive force of today's nuclear stockpiles equals 750,000 bombs of the size used at Hiroshima. Some still consider nuclear weapons to be a viable means of warfare. The possibility of nuclear accidents, terrorism and trafficking in nuclear materials persists. The threat of the use of chemical and biological weapons has not been eliminated.

But at the micro level, the challenges are no less demanding. Tens of thousands of people are still being killed each year by small arms. Anti-personnel landmines are still being planted faster than they are removed. By their very nature, small arms are more difficult to control than nuclear weapons. The legal and illegal trade in conventional weapons, large and small, jeopardizes the gains that resulted from the end of the cold war and consumes too much of the budgets of developing States.

What steps must be taken to meet these challenges? The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) should be ratified and implemented. I welcome the reports of progress in the talks between the two sides and urge them to keep up the momentum. Early ratification of the Treaty by the Russian Federation would allow reductions in the nuclear arsenals to proceed and a START III process to begin. Further joint or unilateral measures by both sides can reduce the risk that the dismantled weapons might be used again.

I have often underlined the importance I attach to preventing and combating illicit trafficking in nuclear materials. I therefore welcome the programme announced at the Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security of the major developed countries held in Moscow this past April. I also commend the work done by a wide range of intergovernmental agencies, under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear materials.

The Conference on Disarmament, intensely busy as it was with the test-ban Treaty, was not able to proceed this year to negotiations on a cut-off of the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. The way forward is now open. A cut-off is a practicable, possible and logical next step in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I urge the First Committee to take up this item with a new spirit of flexibility and to help set the course of the Conference on Disarmament in 1997.

As depositary of the Chemical Weapons Convention, I would like to be able to announce the entry into force of the Convention. This would give it full effect as international law and would allow its sophisticated verification system to come into being. No matter how foolproof the chemical weapons prohibition regime may be, it will not be credible without the participation of the two major Powers. I am gratified that the President of the United States announced during the general debate that he would not abandon the Convention. The Convention is in the best interest of the entire international community, and I urge the Russian Federation and the United States to ratify it as soon as possible. At the same time, I call upon the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, at their upcoming Review Conference, to strengthen that

Convention by finalizing the arrangements for a verification protocol.

Following the adherence to the Treaty of Tlatelolco by all States of the Latin American and Caribbean region in 1994, I have welcomed the signature of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty in December 1995, the signature of the Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga by three nuclear-weapon States in March 1996, and the signature the following month of the Treaty creating the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. These successes have led to a strong call, during this session of the General Assembly, for talks to begin on the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones, including one in the Middle East. I welcome these initiatives and urge the States concerned to bring this noble idea to fruition.

For the men, women and children of war-ravaged countries, and for the safety and security of United Nations peace forces, I shall continue strongly to press for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. I am encouraged by the steps being taken, unilaterally or jointly, by many States to adopt national measures to ban or restrict these weapons, and I support the efforts under way in this Committee to begin negotiations towards a total ban.

The Panel on small arms, established by the General Assembly last year, is using the innovative approach of holding workshops in areas where the proliferation of small arms is a source of increased tension. The first workshop took place in South Africa last month. I am encouraged by the process begun by the Panel, and I look forward to the results that will be reported next year.

As part of the System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which I inaugurated in March 1996, an integrated approach to peace and development is being implemented in various regions of the continent. As one practical example, United Nations assistance to the demobilization of former fighters in Mali and their reintegration into civilian life contributes to the consolidation of peace in that country. I am consulting with other countries in West Africa in order to determine how best to respond to their specific concerns in this area.

I welcomed the signature in June 1995, by almost all the States of Central Africa, of the Non-Aggression Pact drafted under the auspices of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Funding for further steps to reinforce confidence-building in volatile regions is needed, and I express my deep appreciation to those States that are currently funding such activities. I appeal for additional contributions to sustain this effort.

Developing a disarmament agenda for the twenty-first century must be a priority for the Governments of this century. There now seems to be overwhelming support for the proposal to convene another special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That session could assess the security situation in the post-cold-war era and set the negotiating agenda for the years to come. Preparations for such a session could start as early as next year. The actual timing of the session could be left open, if necessary, until consensus emerges on its agenda and programme. The international community is calling for a clear signal that the cold-war era is over and that cold-war approaches to disarmament are being replaced by new and more effective approaches.

I wish the Committee a most successful session.

The Chairman: I thank His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for his inspiring and forward-looking statement, which, I am sure, will help us in our deliberations. I understand that the Secretary-General has other pressing engagements and that he will have to leave us at this point. I wish him every success in his important work.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: Today the Committee will begin its general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items. Permit me first, however, to make a statement as presiding officer of the First Committee.

As we start the substantive part of our work, it gives me real pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all representatives participating in the work of the First Committee during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am fully aware that the office to which I have been elected represents a very demanding duty: to insure the successful and efficient functioning of this body entrusted with the issues of international peace and security.

The Republic of Belarus has always been an active participant and contributor in international forums dealing with disarmament. The contribution of Belarus in the field of nuclear disarmament has been particularly prominent in recent years. Allow me to express my sincere gratitude for the deep appreciation that many have expressed at the efforts Belarus has been undertaking along these lines. I assure the Committee, from this podium, that my country intends to promote this process with growing perseverance and in every way possible. I pledge to foster the valuable traditions established by this Committee over the past years in order to further international cooperation and interaction in implementing its mandate.

The fifty-first session of the General Assembly has started its work in a propitious international climate. A long journey which started in 1954 has ended with a most welcome result: the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This is a commendable outcome of the persistent efforts of the international community, and, I hope, an opening of a new chapter in the endeavours towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

As the Secretary-General just pointed out, 123 States signed the Treaty in less than three weeks. That fact speaks for itself. Indeed, the achievements of the international community in the field of disarmament during the last several years have been impressive. However, much more remains to be done.

The cold war is over. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has been extended indefinitely. START I and START II have been concluded. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been opened for signature. Yet nuclear weapons remain a formidable element of the military posture of the nuclear-weapon States. Serious debate is now open on the future role of nuclear weapons, including the admissibility of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

Viewed from this angle, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons will undoubtedly influence all future discussions on the problem of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, as well as on their elimination. The Court reached a unanimous conclusion that there exists an obligation not only to pursue in good faith negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control, but also to bring them to a conclusion.

Negotiations on such a complex issue will of course not be achieved overnight. Decades of long disarmament-related negotiations have made it clear that arms control and disarmament cannot work without a minimum level of trust and political cooperation. The precondition for successful negotiations is building confidence, openness and transparency. These play a crucial role in maintaining international peace and stability.

The Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok have established nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Africa and South-East Asia. Along with the Antarctic Treaty, they have helped to turn the entire southern hemisphere into a consolidated nuclear-weapon-free zone. These developments have been universally recognized as a major contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament, to the promotion of peace and security in their respective regions — as well as globally — and as an important boost to the adoption of nuclear-weapon-free zones by States in other regions of the world.

The majority of the States Members of the United Nations support a worldwide network of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which would make the production, acquisition and stockpiling of nuclear weapons redundant.

It gives me great pleasure, in my national capacity, to state that the last nuclear missile remaining in the territory of Belarus will be removed very shortly. The entire territory of Central Europe from the Baltic to the Black Seas will be a nuclear-weapon-free space. The inspired initiative for a nuclear-weapon-free Central Europe put forward by Alyaksandr Lukashenko, President of the Republic of Belarus, and Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, has far-reaching global consequences. I believe it has the solid potential to enhance regional stability and to further the post-cold-war security interests of all States.

There is a wide variety of issues ahead of us. One of the most important among them is the urgent necessity to start negotiations in the enlarged Conference on Disarmament on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes. I hope that the difference in views among the members of the Conference on Disarmament which prevented them from establishing an ad hoc committee on this subject last year will be overcome.

A cut-off of the production of fissile material would strengthen nuclear non-proliferation. The safe-keeping, storage, and disposal of enriched uranium and plutonium could become major threats because of the risk of illegal sale and acquisition, and even outright theft, of these highly sensitive materials. Discontinuing production of fissile materials could be a welcome and long-overdue first step in the right direction.

With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, it is a recognized fact that the successful conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction gave a powerful impulse to the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. These agreements, together with the efforts to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, have demonstrated the collective political will and ability of the world community to tackle successfully the complex issue of weapons of mass destruction, which has been at the forefront of all disarmament-related efforts since the Second World War.

The opening for signature of the chemical weapons Convention in January 1993 was a source of pride to the disarmament community. It is imperative, however, to persist in efforts aimed at the earliest possible entry into force of that Convention. Sixty-four countries have already ratified the Convention, leaving it just one country short of entry into force. I hope that the sixty-fifth ratification will soon be forthcoming. However, if the chemical weapons ban is to become a significant reality, the ratification of the Convention by the two major chemical-weapons Powers is of paramount importance and would be a clear-cut demonstration of the moral leadership that the rest of the world expects from them.

The last two years have witnessed an increase in the attention of the disarmament community to the biological weapons Convention. This agreement was the first multilaterally negotiated disarmament convention. Over the years it has effectively prevented the development and production of biological and toxin weapons and has proved its value. However, the Convention does not provide for verification of any sort. Determined to remedy this deficiency, the States parties have embarked on an ambitious project to formulate a verification protocol for the Convention. The issue has been considered by a group of scientific and technical experts, and the findings of that group are now being evaluated by the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. It is encouraging that the results of the last session of the Ad Hoc Group reported considerable success in their undertakings. I look forward to a successful outcome of the upcoming review conference.

Measures pertaining to the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction are no less important to our Committee's work. One of the standing priorities in international relations is the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the need to establish a consensus on an international procedure that would allow for the monitoring of emerging new weapons of mass destruction and provide for international negotiations in order to discern, in a timely manner, the appearance of new types of weapons.

The ecologically safe elimination of weapons, the conversion of military production, the legal transfer of sensitive high technologies and their impact on progress in science and technology, are also of particular importance.

A brief analysis of the statements made at this session of the General Assembly shows that an overwhelming majority of Member States are concerned with the problem of landmines and are determined to pursue it vigorously. This comes as no surprise, since the devastation these weapons cause throughout the world and the untold human suffering they continue to inflict on innocent people have attained dreadful proportions.

I can express my personal satisfaction over the fact that additional protocols to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects have been elaborated. I refer here to the conclusion of amendments to its Protocol II on landmines, and the adoption of an additional protocol on blinding laser weapons.

We are, however, only at the beginning of the road. While there is a multitude of avenues to be explored, I think that the international community could be most successful if it adopted a three-track approach. The first track concerns moratoriums on the transfer of landmines to non-State entities and to States which are not bound by the Protocol to the Convention on certain conventional weapons. The second track concerns strengthening international cooperation in mine clearance and significantly broadening the scope of such cooperation. The third track concerns tackling the landmine issue through international law, that is, through strengthening the Convention itself. The ultimate goal of these undertakings should be a total ban on and the elimination of anti-personnel landmines.

Although weapons of mass destruction remain the focus of disarmament-related activities, the problem of conventional weapons continues to gain ground due to a combination of factors. Among these one should mention ethnic conflicts, the increased volume of arms transfers and alarming trends in the illicit trade in arms. The establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was a first significant step. Although the Register is not a disarmament measure, it has proven to be a highly successful confidence-building instrument for the international community. I look forward with great expectations to the upcoming meeting of the group of governmental experts which is charged with the task of the further improvement and development of this international reporting mechanism.

I also welcome the positive outcome of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, which for the first time has adopted a set of guidelines for international arms transfers, dealing especially with illicit trafficking in arms. In a way, these guidelines can be compared to a programme of action to reduce arms transfers and eradicate the illicit trade in arms through a combination of national legislative and administrative measures and United Nations efforts. The ultimate goal is to ensure that transfers of arms do not contribute to instability and insecurity in nations.

Regional and local conflicts persist in different parts of the world. They have brought to light the issue of the proliferation and excessive accumulation of small arms in many countries. A panel of governmental experts began its examination of the problem this year, and I look forward to its report to the General Assembly next year.

The decision in principle to hold a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is a demonstration of the desire on the part of an overwhelming majority of Member States to analyze in depth the changes that have occurred in the post-cold-war era and to assess the future place and role that disarmament can and should play in the next decade: the first decade of the new millennium. This could be an important opportunity to solicit new concepts and visions prompted by the unprecedented systemic changes in international relations.

Allow me to take a moment to commend the work of international non-governmental organizations and their increased contribution to the work of the United Nations in recent years. The role that civil organizations have played in bringing about consensus on important disarmament agreements cannot be overestimated.

We have important issues ahead of us, and I believe that the deliberations in the First Committee can help to create new, fertile ground for innovative approaches. I am certain that the First Committee can make a significant contribution towards the attainment of our common objective: a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and a greatly reduced level of conventional weapons. I count on the cooperation and good will of all delegations.

Agenda items 60 to 81

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. De Icaza (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Sir, please accept the congratulations of the Mexican delegation on your election to preside over the work of the First Committee. Your experience and your personal qualities augur well for success. Please be assured of the cooperation and support of my delegation in this important task.

The year that has passed since the First Committee met during the last session of the General Assembly has been a particularly productive year for nuclear disarmament. The Treaties of Bangkok and Pelindaba have joined those of the Antarctic, Tlatelolco and Rarotonga, gradually freeing the South of nuclear weapons. The International Court of Justice has declared in a historic advisory opinion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law applicable to armed conflicts. We regret, however, that the Court did not develop its own arguments to their logical and inevitable conclusion.

Finally, a Treaty banning nuclear-test explosions and any other nuclear explosion has been opened for signature.

International peace and security were strengthened on 15 December 1995 with the signing at Bangkok of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, and with the opening for signature at Cairo on 11 April 1996 of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which establishes a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa.

The initiative to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe and including the Baltic States, advanced recently by the President of Belarus, in itself has a positive impact in a region once deeply entrenched in the East-West conflict.

The regime for the denuclearization of Latin America and the Caribbean is almost completed. The full adherence of Guyana to the Treaty of Tlatelolco on 6 May 1996, increases to 31 the number of States of the region for which this instrument is in force.

These nuclear-weapon-free zones are proof that there is a need to free the international community of the dangers that result from the very existence of nuclear weapons. These zones are not an end in themselves, but, rather, a step towards the fulfilment of the obligation of eliminating all nuclear weapons.

Mexico therefore expresses its full support for the initiative taken by Brazil concerning the recognition that the various Treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones are gradually freeing the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas of nuclear weapons.

We need to develop mechanisms of cooperation among the various zones as part of the efforts to consolidate the respective regimes. While negotiations on these Treaties have responded to the characteristics of each region, they have also largely taken into account the experience of those areas where similar regimes already existed.

Consequently, the cooperation between nuclear-weapon-free zones should stimulate the establishment of new ones, particularly in militarily and politically sensitive regions. The meeting in 1995 of the treaty bodies created under the Tlatelolco and Rarotonga regimes, which resulted in the General Assembly resolution on nuclear tests adopted at its previous session, marked the beginning of the kind of fruitful cooperation that the Government of Mexico is committed to promoting.

In this connection, the Council of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) adopted a resolution on 3 April 1996 by which it requested its Secretary-General to prepare a report on the possibility of concluding cooperation agreements with the nuclear-weapon-free zones of the South Pacific, South-East Asia and Africa, with a view to coordinating positions when dealing with disarmament issues in United Nations forums.

My delegation will submit a draft resolution on the consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco that will take up the idea of promoting cooperation between those zones, in accordance with OPANAL's resolution.

On 8 July of this year, a date that merits remembering, the International Court of Justice rendered a historic advisory opinion that categorically de-legitimized nuclear weapons. Mexico had argued before the Court the existence of rules of international law that leave no doubt about the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons in any circumstance. We are therefore satisfied with the advisory opinion, and especially with three of its particularly important conclusions.

First, the Court strengthened basic rules of international humanitarian law when it affirmed that the prohibition of the use of weapons, projectiles or materials that may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects among combatants and civilians is to be observed by all States, whether or not they have ratified the conventions to that effect, because it constitutes an inviolable principle of customary international law. The Court added that all States are bound by rules of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which, when adopted, were merely the expression of the pre-existing customary law, such as the Martens clause.

We welcome the fact that the Court has highlighted the universal applicability of the basic rules of the law of armed conflicts. In this connection we wish to underline that of those basic rules, none is more important than the principle that the norms of international humanitarian law must be fully applied in all circumstances.

This principle is enshrined in common article 1 to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and is reaffirmed in the last preambular paragraph of Additional Protocol I to the Conventions. It constitutes the cornerstone of the whole edifice of humanitarian law, the rules of which must be applied without distinction, regardless of the character or origin of the conflict or of the causes invoked by the parties or attributed to them. In all circumstances, whether extreme or not, humanitarian norms must be respected, and all States are under the obligation to ensure that respect.

Secondly, the Court determined that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflicts, and in particular to the principles and rules of international humanitarian law.

Notwithstanding the arguments in favour of the doctrine of deterrence, the Court refused to say that even in an extreme circumstance in which the very survival of a State would be at stake, it would be lawful to use, or to threaten to use, nuclear weapons.

Lastly, the Court affirmed unanimously that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We underline two elements of this important consideration. The first is the affirmation that the obligation concerns all States, and not merely those that possess nuclear weapons. The second is that such an obligation goes beyond merely conducting negotiations; it is an obligation to conclude such negotiations. Not only did the Court declare that nuclear weapons are illegitimate, it also indicated to us the issue's priority on the disarmament agenda, until we reach a world free of those weapons that the Court affirmed to be of a catastrophic nature.

The Conference on Disarmament devoted three annual sessions to the negotiation of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that, in accordance with the mandate of the General Assembly, was to be universal, verifiable and multilateral, and that would contribute effectively to the process of nuclear disarmament and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects.

Mexico participated actively in those negotiations, and its representative to the Conference on Disarmament chaired the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban during the first of the three years of negotiations. Nevertheless, and like the majority of delegations, we felt that the final result was not to our entire satisfaction. The Treaty that opened for signature on 24 September prohibits test explosions and any other nuclear explosion. This will constrain the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and will impede the development of advanced new types of such weapons.

It is indeed an important event. The international community had been demanding for more than four decades the definitive cessation of those explosions, which periodically reminded us that the fate of humankind depended on whether a button was pressed or not. However, banning nuclear explosions was never an end in itself. We aspired, and still aspire, to the definite end of the nuclear arms race through the total ban of all tests that make possible the qualitative improvement of such weapons.

The nuclear-weapon States opposed the inclusion in the Treaty of any explicit commitment in this respect. We nevertheless trust in their good faith, and we hope that they will abide fully by the spirit and purpose of the Treaty and that they will not pursue in laboratories — through sub-critical explosions, hydrodynamic tests or laser physics — the qualitative arms race they carried out underground.

The entry into force of the Treaty is in jeopardy and depends on the ratification of one and all of the 44 listed States. Nevertheless, its signature alone obliges signatory States to refrain from acts that would defeat its object and purpose. It is to be underlined that the five nuclear-weapon States have already signed the Treaty and therefore may not unilaterally suspend the moratoriums on nuclear explosions that they have declared.

In spite of its shortcomings and imperfections, the Treaty was approved by the General Assembly by an impressive majority of 158 votes, and already more than 100 States have signed it, Mexico among them. The popularity of this Treaty — which a majority of States have criticized for its limited scope and because it does not entirely fulfil the negotiating mandate — is not surprising. The international community, anxious for progress in nuclear disarmament, is aware that the Treaty may constitute an important step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, on the condition of its being followed by negotiations, on a high-priority basis, among all States on a phased programme with agreed time-frames for the consolidation of a world freed of those weapons that threaten the very existence of humankind.

It can be said, in all fairness, that where nuclear weapons are concerned the past year is indeed worth remembering. The same, however, cannot be said with regard to other weapons of mass destruction. For the third consecutive year since its opening for signature, the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons has not entered into force. When it was opened for signature 1993, the Treaty was welcomed as the instrument that was to abolish an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. On that occasion, we declared that the effective implementation of that unprecedented, comprehensive and verifiable agreement would strengthen multilateralism as a basis for peace and international security.

The Convention has been ratified by 64 States, but not by the only two that have declared that they possess huge arsenals of chemical weapons. One more ratification is needed for the Convention's entry into force, but if that occurs without the participation of the United States and Russia, the Convention would automatically become just another exercise in horizontal non-proliferation, thereby losing its object and purpose.

In the first and only resolution of the General Assembly adopted on that Convention after it was concluded, all the signatories underlined the absolute need for it to enjoy universal adherence. Unfortunately, at neither the forty-ninth nor the fiftieth sessions of the General Assembly could we adopt resolutions on the need for this important Convention to enter into force with its objectives intact.

This year, given the circumstances, we must make every effort to ensure that the General Assembly calls upon all States to ratify the Convention and that it requests the Secretary-General to report in 1997 on the status of signatures and ratifications, so as to enable us to examine the Convention's future and thereby to determine whether its declared objectives and its very nature have been vitiated by the lack of specific ratifications and, if that is the case, to take the necessary measures.

At the present time the Convention on the prohibition of biological weapons is being reviewed in order to incorporate a verification mechanism into it. Mexico supports the idea of preparing a protocol on verification and regrets the slowness of the preparatory work that would allow us to initiate negotiations.

The various treaties on non-proliferation presuppose a balance of obligations and the commitment not to acquire a particular type of weapon. These include free access to technology, information and equipment for peaceful purposes. That should lead us to multilaterally negotiated, universal and non-discriminatory verification mechanisms, aimed at building confidence and at stimulating cooperation.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction requires of the international community a comprehensive approach that will take into account the horizontal, vertical and qualitative aspects of non-proliferation as well as the exchange, for peaceful purposes, of technology, information, equipment and materials related to those weapons, including the establishment of control mechanisms for possible dual usage. At the forty-eighth session, Mexico submitted a draft resolution on this item in which it requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report to be submitted to an expert group. The report was submitted, but no expert group has ever studied it. This issue deserves to remain on the General Assembly's agenda and merits a thorough examination with a view to exploring different courses of action. We will submit a draft decision on this question to the Committee.

It has generally been recognized that conventional disarmament and conventional-arms control have better chances of success at the regional level. We know that in the post-cold-war world tension and threats to peace have arisen mainly in the regional and subregional context and that each region has its own characteristics and security needs. It is also obvious that conflicts and local tensions, terrorism and organized crime benefit from the lack of effective conventional-arms control.

During the recent summit meeting of the Rio Group, which was held at Cochabamba, Bolivia, the President of Mexico submitted two proposals. The first was on the adoption of measures to prevent an arms race in Latin America and the Caribbean, which, owing to the diversion of financial resources that would be involved, would have a negative effect on our economic development. The second dealt with the idea of concluding a convention to impede the illicit transfer of weapons, which in that region of the world is linked to drug trafficking and organized crime. The Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group approved in principle both proposals, which will soon be examined in detail.

At a global level, we are aware that certain conventional weapons, owing to their indiscriminate effects and their widespread use, have effects similar to those of weapons of mass destruction. This is particularly true in the case of anti-personnel landmines, which have no military usefulness and are effective only with respect to the civilian population that they decimate.

It was precisely the fate of the civilian population that resulted in the public uproar that led France to request the convening of the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons, which this year concluded positively as far as a new protocol on blinding laser weapons is concerned, and disappointingly with respect to landmines, since it was possible to prohibit only those that are non-detectable. The use of detectable landmines is subject in some cases to the requirement of their being self-destructible or self-neutralizing, but not until a decade after the entry into force of the Amended Protocol, which amounts to allowing the use of present stocks. Not only have landmines not been banned, but the use of sophisticated and expensive devices has also been promoted. If that use is to be massive, as has been the use of mines, we would have absurdly stimulated the production and use of a new weapon of mass, albeit slow-motion, destruction, a result unprecedented in the annals of humanitarian law.

Mexico views as necessary a total prohibition of the deployment, transfer, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines. We will not support in the Assembly any resolution incompatible with that view. Furthermore, in the context of the international Conference recently held at Ottawa, Mexico and Canada presented a project of cooperation for the rehabilitation of the victims of anti-personnel landmines victims in Central America.

The Review Conference on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was an opportunity for the international community to recall its existence and to promote ratifications to the Treaty. We should start preparing the next Review Conference, and this now being done. In August of this year, the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities called upon all States to focus on certain weapons with indiscriminate effects, such as air-fuel explosives, cluster bombs and munitions that contain spent uranium.

We hope that the group of countries that participated in the Ottawa meeting will not conclude its endeavours once it achieves a total anti-personnel landmines ban and that it will remain intact as a group to promote negotiations for the further prohibition of other weapons, such as incendiary weapons, or for the conclusion of new protocols on weapons such as the ones indicated by the Subcommission on minorities.

Prohibitions or limitations of the use of conventional weapons should continue to be negotiated in their natural forum, which is the 1980 Convention, whose review Conferences can and should be prepared for in ad hoc meetings including the participation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. At the Conference on Disarmament, the priority issue can be none other than nuclear disarmament, at least until the nuclear-weapon States adopt a positive and constructive attitude towards it.

Compared to the past history of the second half of the present century, which is about to end, it can be said today that we are living in privileged times. Rivalry between blocs has disappeared; global tensions have been reduced, if not totally eliminated, and it seems that the imminent danger of a nuclear holocaust has receded. The easing of tensions has led to the limitation and reduction of strategic offensive weapons through the START I and START II processes; the international regime of nuclear non-proliferation has been strengthened with the indefinite extension of that Treaty, and nuclear-test explosions have ceased once and for all.

However, nuclear arsenals with a capacity to destroy humankind several times over remain, and as long as those arsenals exist there will be the risk that nuclear weapons may be used, whether on purpose, by accident or by miscalculation. Moreover, the possibility of a terrorist use of nuclear weapons will increase. Nuclear weapons continue to jeopardize the very future of humankind.

That is why the international community represented in this forum and civil society the world over have mobilized in an effort to de-legitimize nuclear weapons and to demonstrate the anachronistic nature of military doctrines that attempt to justify the existence, stockpiling and improvement — and even the use — of such weapons. The total and definitive elimination of nuclear weapons continues to be the highest priority of the international community. There is an obligation incumbent on all States, as was recently underlined by the International Court of Justice, to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

In order to comply with this imperative obligation, Mexico last year sponsored resolution 50/70 P, in which the General Assembly, for the first time, called for the negotiation of a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. In the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body in this matter, the Group of Non-Aligned and neutral States, to which Mexico belongs, insisted on several occasions on the need to establish immediately an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations on a step-by-step programme of nuclear disarmament. My delegation had the honour of coordinating the work of the Group of 21 for the purpose of submitting a draft programme of action to the Conference on Disarmament.

As a result of that exercise, on 7 August of this year the Coordinator of the Group of the 21 presented to the Conference on Disarmament, on behalf of the 28 delegations belonging to that Group, a programme enumerating measures to be adopted in three phases to achieve the consolidation of a nuclear-weapon-free world by the year 2020. We will request that this programme of action be circulated as a document for the information of the First Committee. We are convinced that this proposal can enrich and improve existing options for reaching the goal of eliminating the nuclear nightmare without affecting the security of any State, and can stimulate negotiations on nuclear disarmament, which, I stress, my delegation views as the highest priority.

Mr. O'Rourke (Ireland): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the European Union, let me congratulate you most sincerely on your election to preside over the First Committee. We are confident that your wise direction and the assistance of the other Officers of the Committee will facilitate the work of the Committee this year. The European Union wishes to assure you of its whole hearted support in the discharge of your important responsibilities. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as Iceland and Norway, European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

As we move closer to the twenty-first century, the international security environment presents a mix of tremendous opportunities and continuing and new challenges. Recent weeks have seen the adoption and opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In view of the fact that 64 ratifications have been deposited to date, the Chemical Weapons Convention is expected to enter into force in 1997. We hope for agreement by mid-1998 on a verification protocol to the Convention on biological and toxic weapons. Thus, the commitment of the international community to develop the network of international disarmament and non-proliferation agreements in the field of weapons of mass destruction is steadily showing results.

The past year has also seen a number of concrete achievements in the area of conventional disarmament. In May, the Review Conference of the Convention on conventional weapons concluded its work successfully with the adoption of stricter rules on the use of landmines and a total ban on blinding laser weapons. We welcome the conclusion of the Review Conference of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in May and, in particular, the reaffirmation by the States parties to the Treaty of the continuing and fundamental value they attach to the Treaty as a cornerstone of European security and their full commitment to adherence to its goals and objectives. We urge all States parties to the Treaty to confirm their approval of the final document of the Review Conference by 15 December 1996.

The European Union attaches importance to the timely implementation by the parties of their obligations under the arms-control and regional-stabilization aspects of the Paris Agreement. The signature in January of an agreement on confidence-building measures within Bosnia and Herzegovina, and at the peace conference held at Florence in June of an agreement on subregional arms control, were important first steps towards stabilization in that troubled region. But the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the dangers to peace inherent in the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons remain. In the coming weeks the European Union will address those issues in an open and constructive manner. It is our strong wish to cooperate with all other delegations in the interests of a fruitful First Committee session.

The Security Council, meeting at the level of Heads of State or Government, has recognized that the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The global non-proliferation system received the strongest reinforcement last year with the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). That decision, in conjunction with the decision to strengthen the review process of the Treaty and the decision on the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, improved the prospects for a better international security environment for all countries for the years ahead. Taken together, these decisions provide an essential frame of reference for the work of this Committee and other disarmament forums.

The year 1995 saw the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons made permanent, and 1996 is the year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. For the European Union, this Treaty, which already has 123 signatory States, represents a concrete measure in the spirit of article VI of the NPT and as envisaged in the decision on Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. It is one of the most important multilateral nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament measures concluded by the international community to date. Member States of the European Union had been among the most active participants in the negotiations for the Treaty. The Union strongly supported the initiative taken by Australia to ensure that the international community seized the moment. By contributing to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to the process of nuclear disarmament, the new Treaty will undoubtedly enhance international peace and security. It has already restored confidence that the international community will not let opportunities for progress slip by. The European Union calls on all States to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible in order to permit its entry into force without delay.

The new Treaty is not the end of the process. There is a need for further systematic and progressive efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. With the conclusion of the CTBT negotiations, the European Union expects the Conference on Disarmament to activate without delay the Ad Hoc Committee that was mandated early last year to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The moratoriums on production currently observed by some nuclear-weapon States, including the United Kingdom and France, have created conditions for progress but cannot in themselves provide sufficient assurance against proliferation. The early conclusion of a cut-off treaty is, moreover, another important goal agreed at the NPT Review and Extension Conference. Those delegations that have long sought to have this item inscribed on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament should now show good faith in proceeding with consideration of the item.

The European Union underlines the importance, as acknowledged in the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament agreed at last year's NPT Review Conference, of the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, and by all States of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The European Union attaches priority to global nuclear-arms reductions, as it does to the CTBT and to cut-off. In this context, the Union welcomes the progress that continues to be made, including the important steps taken or announced by the United Kingdom and France, and calls for further reductions.

Since we last met, the United States has ratified the START II treaty. The European Union looks forward to early Russian ratification of that treaty, whose full implementation will bring Russian and United States strategic nuclear-weapons arsenals down to 3,000 and 3,500 respectively.

We applaud the completion by Ukraine, announced on 1 June 1996, of the withdrawal of all nuclear warheads from its territory for destruction in the Russian Federation. This remarkable success for nuclear non-proliferation would not have been possible without outside assistance. We also warmly welcome advances made in the past year that greatly extend the areas of the world covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones.

At the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the intensive efforts undertaken in the framework of Programme "93+2" over the past three years to reinforce further the international nuclear non-proliferation regime by strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the Agency's safeguards system have reached a decisive phase. The European Union confirms its strong support for those objectives and its commitment to Programme "93+2". The Union supported the establishment of the Committee that has been charged by the Board of Governors with drafting a model protocol. We will continue to make every effort to bring the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion at the earliest possible date. We look forward to the adoption by the Board of Governors of a set of new measures that will significantly increase IAEA's capacity to detect undeclared nuclear activities. This would fully accord with the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament adopted at the NPT Review Conference.

The European Union is determined that the enhanced NPT review process agreed last year, which attempts to ensure that the purposes of the preamble and the provisions of the Treaty are being realized, will develop into a valuable new element in the fight against nuclear proliferation. Under the new arrangement, the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the year 2000 Review Conference will take place next year, three years in advance of the Conference. The Union is pleased that the NPT depositories have initiated plans for consultation and caucusing during the period of the First Committee's session with a view to achieving agreement on the location and timing of the 1997 meeting.

The next Review Conference is charged with looking forward as well as back. In addition to making procedural preparations for the next Review Conference, the Preparatory Committee meetings have the substantive task of considering principles, objectives and ways to promote the full implementation of the Treaty, as well as its universality, and making recommendations thereon to the Review Conference. The European Union considers it important that, as agreed last year, future Review Conferences should evaluate the results of the period they are reviewing and identify the areas in which and the means through which further progress should be sought in the future. The review process should consider compliance with the NPT, taking into account the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The European Union intends to prepare actively for an invigorating and productive review of how this Treaty, which remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime, is working on the threshold of the new millennium.

All States members of the European Union are firmly committed to being parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction upon its entry into force. The Union calls on all States signatories to the Convention to complete their respective ratification procedures as soon as possible. In particular, the Union urges those States that have declared possession of chemical weapons to ratify the Convention before it enters into force.

In accordance with its provisions, the Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force 180 days after the deposit of the sixty-fifth instrument of ratification. In view of the fact that 64 ratifications have been deposited to date, the Convention is expected to enter into force in 1997. This will be a landmark event in the disarmament process. It will give major impetus to the elimination of an entire class of weapons of mass destruction and the removal of a most destabilizing threat to both global and regional peace and security. We are concerned that a number of States have not yet signed the Convention, particularly States located in regions of tension, and we call on those States to join the 160 Member States of the United Nations that through their signature have demonstrated their commitment to the purposes of the Convention. The European Union will do its utmost to promote the achievement of universal adherence to the Convention.

The satisfactory implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention will unquestionably result in the growth of confidence between States Parties. The European Union is committed to the implementation of the Convention in a manner that avoids hampering international cooperation in the chemical field for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. It is important that delegations to the Preparatory Commission for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons demonstrate the political will to bring about a successful outcome on outstanding issues in advance of the first States Parties Conference at The Hague next year.

Given the ease with which biological weapons may be produced and indications that not all biological-weapons programmes have been abandoned, the reinforcement of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction with a legally binding and effective verification regime will be in the security interests of all countries. The European Union has adopted a common position designed to serve this end and is actively engaged in the work under way in the Ad Hoc Group, which is mandated to consider appropriate measures, including verification measures, and to draft proposals to strengthen the Convention. Our objective is the adoption of a protocol to the Convention no later than mid-1998. In the run-up to the Convention's Fourth Review Conference later this year, the European Union has redoubled its efforts to ensure that the States Parties take the decisions necessary to give a strong political impetus to the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group. The European Union recognizes that the Ad Hoc Group has made significant progress, including the identification of a preliminary framework for and elaborating basic elements of a legally binding instrument.

We welcome the decision by the Ad Hoc Group at its last session to intensify its work. In this context, we believe that the time allocated work relating to the Biological Weapons Convention in 1997 and 1998 should be substantially increased, irrespective of other priorities in the international disarmament agenda. The European Union also appeals to all States Parties that have not yet done so to submit the annual data required under the confidence-building measures agreed at the Third Review Conference of the Convention.

In addition to the relevant international treaties, export control measures are equally valid instruments for preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It must be clearly understood that the right enshrined in Article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is to be exercised in conformity with the non-proliferation obligations set out in Articles I and II. Thus, far from being an obstacle to the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, nuclear-related export controls are the necessary corollary of peaceful nuclear cooperation. The Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference state that transparency in nuclear-related export controls should be promoted within the framework of dialogue and cooperation among all interested States Parties to the Treaty. The European Union has taken the initiative in developing, with others, a follow-up on this important issue. We look forward to engaging a wide range of countries in dialogue on the subject.

Similarly, the export control arrangements pursued in the framework of the Australia Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the complementary measures of the Wassenaar Arrangement help to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery without hampering the transfer of or access to material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes in the chemical, biological and space research fields. The Australia Group controls accord with both the letter and spirit of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

The Australia Group has undertaken to review, in the light of experience in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention and for the benefit of States Parties demonstrably acting in full compliance with their obligations under the Convention, the measures it takes to prevent the proliferation of chemical weapons. Similarly, the Wassenaar Arrangement is designed to promote transparency and greater responsibility in the transfer of conventional arms and related technologies, where the risks are judged greatest.

The European Union invites all States to adopt responsible policies for transfers of sensitive materials and to establish effective systems of export controls as a means to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We call on other suppliers of nuclear technology to join the members of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group in applying the International Atomic Energy Agency full-scope safeguards requirements as a condition of nuclear supply.

We consider the Missile Technology Control Regime an effective and useful instrument for preventing the proliferation of delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction. We support the strengthening of the MTCR and appeal to all States that have not yet done so to adhere to its guidelines on a voluntary basis. The European Union believes that MTCR has a role to play in dealing with the threat of regional missile proliferation.

The European Union fully supports the United Nations Special Commission and IAEA in their continuing task of identifying and eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and ensuring that Iraq does not develop such weapons again. The European Union congratulates the Special Commission and IAEA on the substantial progress already made, and calls on Iraq to cooperate and to comply strictly with its obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions so that the work can be completed.

The Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects was a major focus of international attention to certain conventional arms issues. In May 1996, the Review Conference successfully concluded its work with the adoption of an amended Protocol II on landmines in addition to the new Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons which it had adopted on 12 October 1995. The European Union considers that the achievements of the Review Conference, taken together, are significant steps forward, both in terms of the landmines Protocol itself and of the development of international humanitarian law. We have in mind the extension of the scope of the Protocol; the strengthening of restrictions on the use of mines; the new prohibitions regarding transfers, which are already being observed on the basis of a political commitment; the provisions on technological cooperation and assistance; and the regular review mechanism.

However, the results fell short of our expectations and of specific goals of the Union, such as an effective and binding verification mechanism and minimal, if any, periods of deferral of compliance. At the close of the Review Conference, the European Union pledged to continue to seek solutions to the problems caused by anti-personnel landmines and to strive towards the goal of their eventual elimination as stated in resolution 50/70 O. The Union firmly believes that the international community at every level must intensify its efforts towards eliminating the causes of this international humanitarian disaster as well as getting to grips with its horrific effects. We warmly commend the timely initiative taken by Canada in convening earlier this month an international meeting of countries that have committed themselves and taken national action to advance a global ban on anti-personnel landmines. We have associated ourselves with the Ottawa Declaration: Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Landmines. A follow-on conference will be hosted by Belgium in June 1997 to review the progress of the international community in achieving a global ban on anti-personnel mines.

The European Union has reviewed its position in the light of developments and has adopted a new Joint Action on anti-personnel landmines. The Joint Action expresses the Union's resolve to combat and end the indiscriminate use and spread throughout the world of anti-personnel landmines and to contribute to solving the problems already caused by these weapons. Furthermore, it sets out the steps which the Union and its member States are to take forthwith towards the full implementation of the results of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Review Conference. As an immediate step, all member States of the European Union are to take all possible action to ratify at an early date, without invoking the provisions concerning deferral of compliance, the amended Protocol II on landmines as well as the new Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. They will also take concerted action to promote universal adherence to the 1980 Convention and the Protocols annexed to it. The Joint Action also enshrines the Union's commitment to support international efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines. The European Union will work actively towards the achievement at the earliest possible date of an effective international agreement to ban these weapons worldwide. It will seek to raise without delay the issue of a total ban, to which it is committed, in the most appropriate international forum. The new Joint Action commits the Member States to implement a common moratorium on the export of all anti-personnel landmines to all destinations and to endeavour to implement national restrictions or bans additional to those contained in amended Protocol II, particularly on their operational use. Importantly, it commits the Union to contribute on an ongoing basis to international mine clearance efforts, including through further contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance and/or in response to the request of a regional organization or a third country's authorities. It allocates an amount of up to 7 million ECUs from the budget of the European Communities for initiatives to be launched up to the end of 1997; this is in addition to the significant national contributions of member States. The Union allocated 3 million ECUs and 3.6 million ECUs to the Trust Fund for 1995 and 1996 respectively. Furthermore, it will continue to provide specific assistance for mine clearance. In this regard, the European Community has devoted over 21 million ECUs to civil mine clearance actions in 1996, as well as pursuing related activities. The new Joint Action develops the multi-faceted character of the Union's extensive contribution to mine clearance.

The European Union is convinced that transparency in armaments is an important factor in building a climate of trust and confidence between States. In relation to weapons of mass destruction, transparency is a function of the measures included in international disarmament agreements to enable States Parties to demonstrate their full compliance with their obligations. It is for this reason that the European Union attaches so much importance to verification of compliance with these agreements.

For similar reasons, the European Union attaches major importance to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. This mechanism provides data on international transfers in seven categories of conventional arms. In each reporting period, beginning with 1992, some 90 countries have submitted returns to the Register. All European Union member States have consistently done so, generally providing, in addition, background information on military holdings and procurement through national production. The improvement in the number and geographical spread of returns to the Register for 1995 is an encouraging sign. However, we remain concerned to encourage universal participation. Clearly, the review of the continuing operation and further development of the Register, to be carried out next year by the Secretary-General with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, will be important in developing this mechanism. In order to promote the functioning of the Register and its further development, the European Union member States will, as in recent years, table a draft resolution reflecting the value we place on the sole universal mechanism we have in the service of transparency in transfers and holdings of conventional arms. We look forward to wide co-sponsorship and consensus support for the resolution.

The European Union continues to attach high importance to the United Nations standardized reporting of military expenditure, as instituted through the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution 35/142 B. Although this measure of transparency and confidence-building has been in effect for about 15 years, the low level of participation by United Nations Member States — just over 20 in 1995 — remains a cause for concern. We must develop greater acceptance by Member States of the value of standardized reporting of military expenditures. By way of addressing this problem, the Union provided a joint reply to United Nations General Assembly resolution 49/66 on "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures". This was done in order to assist the Secretary-General in preparing his report to this session.

In May of this year, the United Nations Disarmament Commission completed its consideration of an agenda item which is of concern to all members of this Committee. The European Union views the adoption by consensus of a set of Guidelines for International Arms Transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H as an encouraging development. It is an acknowledgement that the United Nations, in keeping with its overall purposes and principles, has a legitimate interest in the field of arms transfers and that responsibility in armaments transfers is important for the maintenance of international peace and security. The European Union considers it essential that all States should exercise responsibility in relation to conventional arms transfers. In this context, the European Union welcomes the formal establishment of the Wassenaar Arrangement and looks forward to the implementation of the control lists on the target date of 1 November 1996. We look also to the Conference on Disarmament to address matters related to conventional arms in a more sustained and structured fashion in the future than it has in the past.

The reactivation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments would be a practical demonstration of the political will of the Conference to adopt a balanced agenda of nuclear and conventional arms issues. As the Secretary-General's "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace" makes clear, practical ways need to be found to address the dangers which may arise from the transfer of small arms and light weapons. With a view to assisting the Secretary-General in preparing his report to our next session, the Union has provided a joint reply to General Assembly resolution 50/70 B on "Small arms". We look ahead with interest to the report of the panel of experts established under this resolution.

Confidence-building and disarmament measures have a particular value at the regional and subregional level. Europe has direct experience, within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, of the value of transparency in military matters in developing trust at the regional level. The European Union invites those States that have yet to ratify the Treaty on Open Skies to do so as soon as possible. This Treaty is an important confidence- and security- building measure which will have useful application at the regional and subregional level. I have referred earlier to important developments in conventional disarmament in the European region.

The NPT Review and Extension Conference agreed that internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, enhance global and regional peace and security. The European Union considers such zones as important complementary instruments to the NPT. There have been significant achievements over the past year in the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The Union welcomed the signature in Cairo on 11 April 1996 of the Pelindaba Treaty establishing the African nuclear-weapon- free zone. We are pleased that 49 of the 53 States on the African continent signed the Treaty and recall that four of the five nuclear-weapon States, including the United Kingdom and France, by their signature of the relevant Protocols, have demonstrated their support for the zone. By signing the relevant Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga on 25 March 1996, France, the United Kingdom and the United States demonstrated their support for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the South Pacific on the one hand and their wish to see a permanent end to all nuclear testing throughout the world on the other. The European Union welcomes the efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. The Union supports this project and urges the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to pursue their objective in a way that recognizes general principles of international law. The European Union welcomes the steady consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the first Treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a large inhabited region of the world.

Mindful that the NPT Review and Extension Conference called on all States Parties — and in particular the nuclear-weapon States — to do so, the European Union continues to support efforts for the early establishment by States in the region of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. This Committee has a responsibility to approach this difficult issue, as all other issues, in a balanced and constructive way.

Accession by regional States, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East, to the NPT, which remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime, would contribute to confidence that nuclear programmes in the regions in question were exclusively for peaceful purposes.

The European Union wishes to underline the importance it attaches to efforts towards strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. Our joint reply to the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 50/75 comprehensively describes the Union's approach, with particular reference to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership initiative launched at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Barcelona in November 1995. The Union has also provided a joint reply to United Nations resolution 50/80 B on "Development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States", on which subject the Secretary-General will report to the Committee next year.

The European Union participated very actively in Working Group II of the United Nations Disarmament Commission this year. From the Working Group's exchange of views on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, there emerged a Chairman's non-paper which has many useful elements for future work. In this context, the Union would draw the attention of the Committee to its own working paper setting out succinctly the Union's perception of elements on which all participating delegations might agree.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of careful preparation and consensus-building on all aspects of the convening of a fourth special session on disarmament, which would have the task of considering disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the changed international security environment. Having regard to the major disarmament and non-proliferation conferences already scheduled for the remaining years of the decade and to the need to concentrate scarce resources on specific and focused disarmament events and on goals attainable in the short term, consensus on the timing of another special session on disarmament and broad agreement on its objectives are vital to the prospects of success. Developing the balance of the agenda between weapons of mass destruction issues and conventional weapons issues will require painstaking work, which in turn has a bearing on the question of timing. Our consideration of these interrelated and important issues will benefit if all delegations cooperate constructively in the First Committee, as happened in the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

In deciding on 17 June of this year to implement its earlier decision CD/1356, the Conference on Disarmament admitted a further 23 States as members, bringing the total membership of the main negotiating body on disarmament to 61. The European Union reiterates here its satisfaction with the admission of the new members and the importance it continues to attach to the timely consideration of the other candidatures to date. The European Union repeats its earlier expression of disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament failed to consider the admission of the remaining candidates before the end of its 1996 session, notwithstanding the terms of its own decision CD/1356 and of United Nations resolution 50/72 C. Given that it has always been the European Union's objective that all States which have applied for Conference on Disarmament membership to date should be admitted, and given that some of the remaining candidatures of European Union member States were submitted over a decade ago, the European Union will support a draft resolution on the issue of the remaining candidatures at this session of the Committee.

Finally, the question of rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee is not on our agenda this year. Last year, member States of the European Union contributed actively to the thematic debates which followed the Committee's general debate. We believe that the further development of these informal discussions would enhance understanding of our respective positions and thereby contribute to constructive and efficient work by this Committee. We look forward to the active participation of all delegations in the thematic discussions this year.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): I should like, first of all, to extend our congratulations on your election as Chairman of our Committee. We are confident that under your stewardship we will achieve substantive progress on the many crucial issues on our agenda. I should also like to extend our felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

This year's session of the First Committee is convened against the backdrop of some encouraging developments in arms limitation and disarmament. After years of frustrating and sterile controversy, we have finally realized our collective goal of banning nuclear explosions for all time and in all environments. Member States of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other South-East Asian nations, at their meeting held last December, signed the historic Treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. Likewise, the Pelindaba Treaty of last April has made the African continent a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Meanwhile, with the signature of France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America in March of this year, all the nuclear-weapon States have now acceded to the relevant Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga. Furthermore, the agreed framework accord between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been implemented to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. Yet another positive development is the recent transfer of nuclear weapons from the territories of Belarus and Ukraine to the Russian Federation, and the application of full-scope safeguards agreements reached by these States with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have assured their non-nuclear status. Taken together, these advances have bolstered our hopes of eventually achieving the goal of a nuclear-free world.

But we are also acutely aware of a number of profoundly negative developments. Despite expectations by the international community, the summit meeting held between the two major powers last April in Moscow regrettably failed to address the question of the further reduction of strategic arsenals. Prospects for the early ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction by the two largest possessors of these weapons have unfortunately receded into the background with the attendant consequences. New challenges to non-proliferation and international security, such as illicit commerce and trafficking in nuclear technology and materials, nuclear-weapons-related accidents as well as the frightening prospects of nuclear terrorism that have begun to emerge, have introduced a profoundly destabilizing element into the strategic equation. Meanwhile, strategic posturing by some nuclear-weapon States, increased defence expenditures, new ballistic missile defence systems and exclusive control clubs are some of the regrettable features of the post-cold-war era.

To facilitate our endeavours to achieve the priority goal of global nuclear disarmament and related issues, we now have the 1995 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) statement by the nuclear powers, the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons prepared by the Group of 21 and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

First, the achievements of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference should be restated unambiguously and categorically. The three decisions adopted at that Conference are inextricably interrelated and constitute a comprehensive package. This was made clear in the extension decision, which reaffirmed article VIII, paragraph 3 of the Treaty, emphasized the need for the strengthening of the review process, and underlined the importance of implementing the decision on Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. Hence, the immediate agenda to achieve the aims of the NPT should be the strengthening of the review process through the primary responsibility of States Parties to the treaty in fulfilling their obligations, especially under article VI. We share the widely held view that the indefinite extension of the NPT was rendered possible on the basis of meaningful and continuing progress on nuclear disarmament.

Secondly, the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons submitted by the Group of 21 in Geneva contains a realistic approach to attain this priority objective. In Indonesia's view, it consists of an all-encompassing and mutually supportive set of measures in all relevant areas leading to nuclear disarmament under effective multilateral auspices. The negotiating process itself could proceed in time-bound phases, while ensuring at each phase the development of appropriate procedures, measures and agreements.

Such an approach would include, *inter alia*, identifying the duties and obligations of the nuclear Powers to refrain from the threat or use of nuclear weapons; initiating negotiations towards an international convention on security assurances to non-nuclear States; banning the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes; stemming the qualitative growth and improvement of nuclear weapons; and searching for alternatives to the so-called doctrines of deterrence and reliance on nuclear weapons.

These should be followed by concrete measures of nuclear disarmament, such as the initiation of negotiations for further deep reductions in strategic nuclear forces, which could be undertaken in a series of phased actions; dismantlement of weapons that are withdrawn by States and an undertaking not to modernize their weapons; genuine build-down of nuclear arsenals, an essential component of which would be multilateral monitoring of existing stocks of nuclear warheads; reduction of operationally deployed nuclear weapons and handing over of the fissile material to multilaterally supervised storage.

Over and above those approaches, a genuine commitment to a nuclear-free world by the nuclear Powers has become imperative. Such a commitment would greatly enhance the prospects for international security, prepare the ground for more drastic cuts in nuclear armaments, and bolster efforts for their total elimination. The declaration of stockpiles of plutonium and highly enriched uranium would enhance the overall transparency of nuclear weapon programmes, which would constitute a valuable confidence-building measure. It would also reinforce other initiatives such as visits to nuclear-weapon facilities, discussion of nuclear doctrines and changes in force postures, which would remove suspicions and thereby enhance cooperation. Furthermore, as called for by the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, cooperative arrangements for managing nuclear weapons involving both nuclear and non-nuclear nations have become essential. Thus, the stage would be set for the implementation of the various components of the Programme of Action with a unified approach through the adoption of concrete and forward-looking measures.

The cause of nuclear disarmament was bolstered by the significant contribution made by the 10 countries of South-East Asia. Following a series of intensive consultations, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit held in Bangkok signed the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. It encompasses the territories of all States Parties to the Treaty as well as the maritime areas under their sovereignty and jurisdiction in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The States concerned have undertaken not to develop, manufacture or otherwise acquire, possess or have control over nuclear weapons and to utilize nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes under IAEA safeguards. While the Treaty is yet to be ratified, we hope that the nuclear powers will extend their support by acceding to its Protocol. Thus, with the conclusion of Treaties for nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and Africa, along with the Antarctic, Rarotonga and

Tlatelolco Treaties, the southern hemisphere should become free of the nuclear menace. Indonesia extends its full and unstinted support for the aspiration of the States concerned, which have shown a commonality of interests and firm determination to cooperate in transforming this large segment of the earth's surface into a nuclear-free area.

After two and half years of protracted and arduous negotiations, the Conference on Disarmament concluded the long-sought ban on nuclear testing. Indeed, successive meetings of non-aligned countries have long stressed the need for a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a step that must be taken not only to stem horizontal and vertical proliferation but also to achieve the eventual elimination of nuclear armaments.

The Treaty outlaws nuclear test explosions by all States in all environments for all time, ensures that the ban is effective and verifiable, and provides new ground for the realization of the objectives set by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. However, having become a reality in large measure because of the substantial compromises made by the non-nuclear States, the Treaty is flawed in its essential aspects. It allows for the improvement of nuclear arsenals and related technologies through laboratory-scale nuclear testing. A treaty that permits technical loopholes for testing cannot be comprehensive, which has all along been the *raison d'etre* for the CTBT. Further, the Treaty does not address the question of nuclear disarmament, as if a CTBT was an end in itself. The entry into force of the Treaty is also uncertain, as it requires ratification by 44 signatories deemed to be nuclear-capable within a set time-frame. This has placed the future of the Treaty in jeopardy.

These inherent weaknesses notwithstanding, it would be unrealistic to underestimate the importance of what was achieved in the Conference on Disarmament, which has once again demonstrated the validity of multilateralism in nuclear arms limitation. We fully agree that the time has come for the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee for negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. Moreover, the international community cannot dispense with a CTBT, despite its imperfections, because failure to seize an existing opportunity would have led to negative implications for disarmament and we would have run the risk of delaying action to an uncertain future. It should also be emphasized that the CTBT does not constitute the ultimate goal of our decades-long effort but should lead to concerted endeavours by all States, in particular nuclear powers, to attain our priority objective of nuclear disarmament. Having signed the Treaty on that basis, it is my delegation's hope that it will eventually be supported by the entire membership so that it will become an effective instrument to move towards the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

As a reflection of Indonesia's commitment to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, I am pleased to inform the Committee, with regard to the implementation of verification mechanism of the CTBT, that the Indonesian Government will provide six seismic stations, which will integrate with the international seismic network in order to monitor nuclear explosions. Furthermore, this week in Jakarta, my Government plays host to the Asia and Pacific workshop on the Third Technical Test and the CTBT, organized by the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Cooperative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events.

Thirdly, my delegation warmly welcomes the ICJ's advisory opinion concerning the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. This question, which over the years has been a pre-eminent concern of the global community, has found expression in successive documents of the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and scores of international conferences and meetings. No form of warfare has confronted humanity with dangers even remotely comparable with the dangers unleashed by the use of nuclear weapons, which adds a frightening dimension to the potentialities for worldwide catastrophe. Their possession and possible use constitutes an unprecedented threat to human society and civilization. What is at stake is the most fundamental right of all humans and of nations, that is, the right to their very survival and existence. Despite these self-evident and principal concerns, the major powers have shown a callous disregard for the global calamitous consequences that would surely ensue from the use of nuclear weapons.

Although the political, military and ethical aspects of nuclear weapons have been discussed by Member States on numerous occasions in the past, it is the legal implications of their use that have to be fully addressed and clarified. It is in this context that the advisory opinion of the ICJ has set the legal parameters whereby the use of nuclear weapons would violate not only customary international law but also the Geneva and Hague Conventions. It is particularly gratifying that the ICJ pronounced unambiguously that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." (*A/51/4, para. 182*)

More than eight years have elapsed since the international community reviewed the status of disarmament during the General Assembly's third special session on disarmament held in 1988. Meanwhile, a myriad of unresolved issues has continued to be of pre-eminent concern to the international community, calling for a reassessment of our disarmament agenda as well as the formulation of new strategies and approaches. One central aim not yet fully met by the United Nations is that of general and complete disarmament. There is an imperative need to continue to build on the agreements already reached and for concerted efforts focused on unresolved issues which should be addressed at the forthcoming fourth special session on disarmament, as they represent a continuing threat to international peace and security.

In this context, we would endorse an agenda that included basic principles and general guidelines for the limitation and elimination of nuclear armaments and recognized the importance of limiting conventional armaments. The institutional arrangements would also have to be reviewed, especially the functioning of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament issues.

The convening of the fourth special session on disarmament would rightly reaffirm that disarmament is a common concern in which all nations have a legitimate role to play. It would reaffirm the profound sense of urgency with which we all view the overriding need to terminate the frantic accumulation of armaments, with its incalculable consequences for mankind. The need for multilateral deliberations and multilateral agreements, and thus the indispensable role of the United Nations, would also be explicitly recognized. Furthermore, it would provide a global forum where the international community as a whole could devote full attention to a comprehensive review and assessment of the wide range of disarmament issues. General Assembly resolution 50/70 F has called for the establishment of a Preparatory Committee whose primary task is to prepare a draft agenda, examine all relevant questions relating to the special session and submit its recommendations to the General Assembly. We are therefore duty-bound to start the preparatory process during early next year so as to permit the convening of the fourth special session on disarmament in 1999.

Mr. Wyzner (Poland): Before I turn to the substantive part of my intervention, Sir, let me first offer you my sincere felicitations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are pleased to see the representative of neighbourly Belarus in that position of high responsibility. You will have my delegation's full cooperation in the discharge of your difficult mandate. I also take this opportunity to add my congratulations to all the members of the Bureau of the Committee.

Since my country has associated itself with the statement just made by the Ambassador of Ireland on behalf of the European Union, I shall confine my intervention to some questions of more direct concern to Poland. I wish first to give due attention to an issue which, in the view of my delegation, is pre-eminent in the context of arms control and disarmament.

Today, as the United Nations turns 51, the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter are as crucial as they were at the time of the founding of the Organization. This is especially true with regard to the principal responsibility of the United Nations:

> "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace".

Poland is gratified, that in pursuit of that basic goal, the General Assembly, at the close of its fiftieth session on 10 September, took, on Australia's initiative, a momentous decision to approve and commend for signature the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In the view of my country, the impressive number of signatures deposited under the Treaty text by the Heads of State — among them, the President of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski — and by Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers from around the world demonstrates the determination of States to promote a global security architecture that no longer needs to rely on the sustained qualitative development and numerical growth of nuclear arms. Today, the nature of threats to peace and international security does not, in our view, call for the ultimate weapon. On the eve of the year 2000, practicable and realistic disarmament measures, confidence-building and all-round cooperation commend themselves as more credible safeguards of peace.

Such safeguards have worked in one part of Europe, making a decisive contribution to its peace, stability and prosperity. Poland's well-known determination to integrate with the Euro-Atlantic economic, political and military structures, in particular the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is motivated by its strong desire to contribute to consolidating and expanding that area of stability, cooperation and prosperity as the best safeguards of peace and security throughout the European continent.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, an elusive goal for over four decades, is important not only because it responds to mankind's aspirations. Its significance resides first and foremost in its tangible, practical implications for global peace and security. It significantly reinforces the existing regime of non-proliferation of nuclear arms; it staves off qualitative nuclear-arms development and maps the way to further progress in nuclear disarmament efforts. Together with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction of 1993, the CTBT represents a major step to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction.

It has been most gratifying for Poland that, for the first time in the nuclear era, all five nuclear Powers are of one mind with regard to the cessation of nuclear tests. Their joint observance of nuclear test moratoriums is unassailable proof of their good faith. With the CTBT in place, the international community has not squandered the historic opportunity for turning that remarkable meeting of minds on the nuclear test-ban into a binding rule of international law. We therefore urge all United Nations Members that have not yet done so to sign the CTBT and seek its entry into force as soon as possible.

At this juncture, I cannot refrain from reflecting on the Conference on Disarmament and its role in making the CTBT happen. Its strenuous efforts with a view to a timely discharge of its negotiating mandate must be commended.

After two and a half years of intensive efforts presided over successively by the representatives of Mexico, Poland and the Netherlands, the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban had come to the end of its negotiating tether. Earlier this year, it appeared that the negotiating possibilities were clearly exhausted in Geneva. Consequently, while the final draft treaty presented by the Netherlands was not fully satisfactory to many delegations, a broad convergence of views developed that the document represented a judicious compromise and, indeed, the best achievable result.

The fact that one member of the Conference on Disarmament, in the exercise of its sovereign rights, has refused to go along with consensus in no way detracts, in our opinion, from the intrinsic merit of the collective accomplishment of the Conference. Many of its members, Poland among them, were of the view that the international community had awaited the test-ban Treaty for too long, that too much was at stake in the CTBT and that too much of a collective effort had gone into its negotiation, for them, at the end of the day, to see the draft treaty text discarded and ignored.

As a country that played a considerable role in the negotiating process, Poland believes that it was right and appropriate for the Treaty text to be brought before the broader international community in order to allow the General Assembly to see for itself and recognize the intrinsic value of that accord. The vote on General Assembly resolution 50/245 leaves no doubt that the General Assembly's finding was positive in regard to the draft treaty and its negotiators.

As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament has again confirmed its expertise and enduring usefulness, demonstrating in the process the important role which multilateral diplomacy can play in the field of arms control and disarmament.

With the CTBT off the Conference's agenda, a pertinent question remains: On what realistic goal or goals should the Conference on Disarmament now urgently focus its attention? An agenda dating back to the cold-war confrontation has obviously lost its relevance. A new, more realistic one needs to be developed urgently. Obviously, in this exercise, any attempts at artificial or formal linkages would not be helpful. Pending the conclusion of efforts now under way to review the Conference's agenda and to ensure a better balance between nuclear and conventional issues, there is scope, in our view, for productive multilateral disarmament efforts in the days ahead.

An outstanding topic is, of course, the problem of the cessation of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. A negotiated ban in that regard would be a natural supplement to the CTBT. It would be consonant not only with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, but also with the important political steps already taken by some nuclear Powers to halt or significantly reduce the further production of weapons-grade fissionable materials. Poland is of the view, therefore, that constructive purpose-oriented efforts in that area ought to be urgently resumed in Geneva, building on the ground already covered.

We do believe that the Conference on Disarmament could also usefully resume its work in other areas that have been addressed over the years, albeit without distinct success. That certainly applies to the questions of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, transparency in armaments and security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. With regard to the latter issue, we are convinced, for instance, that, once reactivated, the subsidiary organ on security assurances could benefit from the relevant Security Council discussions held earlier this year. Security Council resolution 984 (1995) on unilateral security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States commends itself as a suitable starting point for examination of the feasibility of broader multilateral solutions.

Poland has consistently held that, owing to their confidence-building potential, the issue of transparency in armaments and the broader question of conventional arms-control measures, on both the regional and global scale, deserve urgent consideration. In particular, further work needs to be carried out on the possible substantive and geographical expansion of the Register of Conventional Arms. Like many other States, Poland has regularly submitted standardized annual returns to the Register. To be fully meaningful as a confidence-building instrument, the Register must gain universal application. We therefore call on those States which have not yet done so to begin submitting their returns to the Register. Poland will be among the sponsors of an appropriate draft resolution in that respect.

The use of conventional arms, often random and always indiscriminate, takes the sad credit for the death and suffering of thousands of innocent victims of local and regional conflicts. Continued indifference to calls of the international community for effective remedial action in that area is no longer sustainable. These weapons and their use must also be addressed in contexts other than the humanitarian. In Poland's firm view, the Conference on Disarmament must have a role to play in that regard. This applies in particular to the question of landmines, as well as to other aspects of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects. Here, as with respect to security guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States, the Security Council has made useful suggestions which deserve careful in-depth examination in the appropriate contexts, including that of the Conference on Disarmament. We strongly believe that the question of landmines in particular must not escape the attention of the Conference. Although certain restrictions with regard to landmines were agreed to at the last Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on certain conventional weapons, they do not offer an adequate response to the problem.

My country has initiated a procedure leading to the ratification of the modified Protocol II to the Convention on certain conventional weapons. We urge other United Nations Members to do likewise in order to promote the early entry into force of that instrument. At the same time, we consider that it falls far short of actual needs. The time has come for more tangible and meaningful measures. Indeed, Poland is among those countries which deem it imperative to advance the cause of a global ban on the use, stockpiling, promotion and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, irrespective of the level of their technical sophistication. We therefore welcome the declaration adopted at the international strategy conference on anti-personnel landmines held at Ottawa earlier this month. The broad consensus which has emerged in Ottawa on the need for States to work together to ensure

> "the earliest possible conclusion of a legally-binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines"

is a good augury for early progress in that respect. While we are open as to where and how to start dealing with the landmine issue, we continue to believe that the enlarged Conference on Disarmament offers a suitable venue for international efforts in that respect. That venue should not be dismissed.

Poland is among those Members which have sponsored all General Assembly resolutions calling for a landmine-export moratorium. It is our intention to cosponsor an appropriate draft resolution on landmines this year as well. Poland has not produced any landmines since the mid-1980s. In keeping with the relevant General Assembly resolution, it has also refrained from their exportation, even though a formal moratorium on such exports has been in force only since September 1995.

At this juncture, let me note that Poland favours entrusting humanitarian mine-clearance responsibilities to United Nations peacekeepers. We find it appropriate that routine peacekeeping tasks, as well as those undertaken within the framework of post-conflict reconstruction, should encompass mine-clearance. In fact, the Polish contingent in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has been involved in such activities for quite some time.

The question of chemical weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has been a subject of traditional interest to Poland for a number of years. As will be recalled, my country, alternating with Canada, used to submit and pilot appropriate General Assembly draft resolutions, a role which we intend to resume this year.

Today, it is with special satisfaction that we note an important development with regard to the CWC. Opened for signature in Paris in January 1993, the Convention has achieved 64 of the 65 ratifications that are necessary for its entry into force. That momentous event is now imminent. With the final ratification conceivable any day, we can confidently look forward to the entry into force of the CWC early in 1997. As a result, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will be empowered to assume full control over the implementation process of the Convention. We welcome the fact that its compliance-verification mechanism is in place and fully operational.

The great contribution of this accord to international security has been widely recognized by all States. It is our deep hope that all signatories, especially those possessing chemical weapons, will ratify the Convention as soon as possible and that the world will at long last be freed from chemical weapons, in accordance with the time-frames agreed in the Convention.

Poland's early ratification of the Convention confirms our non-proliferation policy. It has also offered a signal of our determination to seek its earliest entry into force. We stand ready to contribute further to the full implementation of the Convention. To this end, Poland intends to present its candidature and seek election to the Executive Council at the first Conference of the States Parties. At the same time, we are undertaking all necessary measures to fulfil our national obligations under the Convention. In accordance with Government decisions, the national system of implementation of the Convention will be founded upon a firm legislative basis. It will give effect to all basic obligations and responsibilities of Poland, and provide, *inter alia*, for an appropriate administrative mechanism in this respect. Since Poland has never possessed chemical weapons, our obligations will thus concern the CWC provisions which govern the chemical industry, as set forth in article VI and in particular in the declarations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be designated the National Authority, over which I will have the honour of presiding. The Authority will serve as a contact point for the Organization and other Member States and will function as an umbrella agency working in close liaison with all institutions involved in the national implementation of the CWC.

My country has been actively participating in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We hope for an increased pace of the permanent negotiating process at The Hague. We also look forward to a sustained, intensive search for compromise solutions with respect to all the unresolved issues, especially in the sphere of implementation. These negotiations, in our opinion, will be more productive if there is a clear understanding of the imperative need to maintain the basic provisions of the Convention intact and if all negotiating parties are prepared to demonstrate their political willingness to seek mutually acceptable solutions to all outstanding issues in the agreed text of the Convention. Poland would find unacceptable any attempt to reinterpret any provision of the Convention, for this could upset the delicate balance of rights and obligations of the States parties, particularly in the sphere of verification.

In concluding my intervention, I wish to restate the commitment of the Republic of Poland to the broad goals of disarmament, both nuclear and conventional. We are determined to pursue them in close cooperation with the members of the European Union and the whole international community, in the hope that, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, they will pave the way to a peaceful and prosperous future for all nations.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): May I congratulate you, Sir, and the members of the Bureau on your election. I am confident that, under your stewardship, this Committee will be able to carry out its work to its successful conclusion. My delegation extends to you our fullest cooperation.

My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the very important and comprehensive statement he has just made to this Committee. His statement will surely provide a useful setting for the discussion of the issues before the Committee.

My delegation has consistently maintained that the United Nations has a central role to play and a primary responsibility in addressing the issues of disarmament in ways that will further strengthen international peace and security. In doing so, we believe that the multilateral mechanisms of the United Nations system should be fully utilized. Recent developments in the field of disarmament should inspire and motivate us to strive harder to enhance our collective determination to promote genuine progress towards the realization of the goals of general and complete disarmament. My delegation hopes that the deliberations at this session of the General Assembly will make a positive and meaningful contribution to the attainment of these goals.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 10 September this year has been described as one of the most significant events pertaining to nuclear disarmament. My Prime Minister, Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, expressed Malaysia's position on the CTBT during his recent address to the General Assembly at this session. He characterized the CTBT as being flawed and deficient in a number of aspects, not the least of which were its failure to place the Treaty in the overall context of nuclear disarmament, its lack of a clear time-frame for the total elimination of nuclear weapons and an ill-conceived and controversial entry-into-force provision.

Nevertheless, Malaysia supported the enabling resolution during the resumed session of the fiftieth General Assembly and will sign the Treaty out of the realization that an imperfect Treaty is better than no treaty. While we regret that the Treaty will not put an end to all forms and manner of testing of nuclear-weapon devices, the Treaty will halt, or at the very least, strongly inhibit nuclear testing as we know it. The challenge before the international community, pending the entry into force of the Treaty, is to ensure that the current moratoriums on nuclear testing are being and will continue to be observed, while exerting every effort to secure the universal endorsement of the Treaty.

The Malaysian delegation attaches vital importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a global instrument to check nuclear proliferation. It is the hope of my delegation that the review process to strengthen the NPT, which is due to begin in 1997, will provide us with the opportunity to consider further steps that could be taken by States Parties to fulfil their Treaty obligations, particularly in respect of those stipulated in article VI of the Treaty. We also hope that the review process will seriously consider efforts that could be made to bring into the NPT regime those few countries that remain outside, so as to achieve its much-desired universality. This remains an extremely important objective. In this regard, my delegation wishes to underscore the special role and responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States vis-à-vis the NPT, as the fulfilment of their part of the bargain is critical to ensuring the universality of the Treaty.

My delegation welcomes the recent Advisory Opinion delivered by the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, in response to General Assembly resolution 49/75 K. Malaysia and 21 other countries presented separate written and oral submissions to the Court at The Hague. While the Court did not conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons should be lawful or unlawful, even in extreme circumstance of self-defence in which the very survival of a State would be at stake, it concluded unanimously that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". *(A/51/4, para. 182 (f))*

While we would have preferred a categorical ruling by the Court outlawing the threat or use of nuclear weapons, my delegation nevertheless considers the Court's Advisory Opinion to be an important development in the overall disarmament context. It was a positive contribution by the Court to the realization of the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons, which must be pursued by the international community if we are to eliminate the possibility of this planet, and all the people on it, being annihilated by these horrendous weapons of mass destruction. My delegation salutes the Court for this courageous legal Opinion, which in our view has reinforced the faith of the international community in the integrity and the important role of the Court in the international system.

To render the Court's Advisory Opinion meaningful, this Committee and the General Assembly should work at this session towards accelerating the process of nuclear disarmament. Towards this end, in our determined pursuit of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, Malaysia, together with other like-minded countries, will be initiating a follow-up draft resolution in this Committee pertaining to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. We hope that this initiative will be supported by all those countries that are fundamentally opposed to the threat or use of nuclear weapons and desire to see a world entirely free of these weapons of mass destruction.

My delegation is encouraged by the accelerating trend of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In December 1995, the countries of South-East Asia, after long years of negotiation, concluded the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which will contribute to the further enhancement of regional peace and security. This Treaty calls upon the nuclear Powers to accede to the Protocol to the Treaty; the South-East Asian States look forward to this accession at an early date.

My delegation also lauds the signing of the Cairo Declaration on 11 April 1996, which formally established the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone through the Pelindaba Treaty. The establishment of these zones, in addition to those established in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Treaty of Tlatelolco and in the South Pacific through the Treaty of Rarotonga, reflects the genuine aspiration of the peoples of these regions to be free of nuclear insecurity. With the establishment of the four nuclear-weapon-free zones, the entire southern hemisphere is now almost nuclear free. The further strengthening of these regimes through the establishment of new ones, especially in conflict-prone areas of the world, would be a major contribution to promoting nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In this respect, the initiative being taken in this Committee by the delegation of Brazil aimed at further consolidating existing nuclear-weapon-free zones is commendable.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that deliberations in this Committee and at this session of the General Assembly will contribute to advancing the disarmament process a step further towards the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We urge delegations to draw inspiration and encouragement from recent positive developments in nuclear disarmament, such as the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion and the signing of the CTBT. However, this can happen only if old and outdated security concepts, paradigms and mind sets are discarded, and the sooner the better. A new phase must begin to persuade and prod nuclear-weapon States to rethink their nuclear policy in the post-cold-war period. At the same time, every effort should be made to discourage or prevent States with aspirations to acquiring nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction from proceeding with their plans.

In the interests of saving time, I have touched on only some of the issues before us. My delegation intends to make further brief and, hopefully, focused interventions on other specific issues in the course of deliberations in this Committee.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall be brief. On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your assumption of the leadership of our Committee. Your country, Belarus, has taken an exemplary stand in the field of disarmament and your presence is therefore especially encouraging.

These meetings of the First Committee are taking place at a new and unprecedented political moment, which the international community must exploit if it is to make progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. To date, more than 130 States have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is already a reality.

We must now make progress in those areas in which there have been delays. The Chemical Weapons Convention must enter into force; its non-entry into force is an anachronism that does not fit into the new and unprecedented international context in which we are living. Now that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been adopted, the Conference on Disarmament must make substantial progress in negotiations to arrive at a fissile material cut-off convention.

As a full-fledged member of the first Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone on Earth, established under the Treaty of Tlatelolco, we firmly believe in the vital need to consolidate each of the other nuclear-weapon-free zones of our planet. In the South Atlantic, an area of particular importance to Argentina, a nuclear-weapon-free zone is in operation. In our view, there is no cause for concern with regard to potential conflicts in this area.

We appeal to all States, especially to the nuclear-weapon States, to continue to move forward on the path already charted.

Flexibility and imagination should be the guiding principles of our negotiations. The recent Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice provides stimulating ideas that, contrary to what might be thought, are widely applicable, since the spirit of the document clearly encompasses all countries. The force of all these ideas has led my country to change the way it acts and to move towards building a new framework for inter-State relations.

New challenges face us in what the Secretary-General correctly terms "micro-disarmament". Work on the major topics of macro-disarmament is now in the process of being implemented and completed. Argentina would now wish to draw attention to the need to resolve the concrete problems affecting the daily life of our societies. I am referring to the international trade in arms and the planting of anti-personnel landmines. The international trade in arms has become potentially very harmful at a time when new territorial disputes and inter-community conflicts are proliferating in various parts of the world.

In connection with this trade, Argentina is involved, through the Organization of American States Special Committee on Hemispheric Security, in the development of inventories of confidence-building measures that are appropriate to the western hemisphere and are based on our own experience and on that of other regions.

At the global level, we support the functioning of the Register of Conventional Arms. This is undoubtedly one of the main achievements of multilateral disarmament in recent years.

As regards the laying of anti-personnel landmines, we believe that the time has come to negotiate an international treaty totally banning the use of all types of mines. Argentina has long been opposed to this type of weapon, which is particularly hard on the civilian population. It is in our power to find a solution very soon.

We know that, in the interest of peace and security today, we have to embark on new paths. But we are now able to take up the struggle against the so-called new threats to security because, fortunately, we are closing the door on a period in which the possibility of nuclear holocaust touched the lives of everyone in the world.

Major challenges lie ahead. The agenda of this Committee makes that remarkably clear. We therefore have to respond with imagination and flexibility. The reforms we undertake should be geared more to the future than to duplicating the structures of the past. My delegation will make every effort to contribute to the success of this process.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I would like to inform members of the Committee that, at my request, the Secretariat is trying to arrange conference facilities for a special meeting in order to enable the First Committee to consider the relevant part of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, which is contained in document A/51/6. This special meeting of the Committee will be announced in the *Journal* in due course.

I would like to remind the Committee that, in accordance with the Committee's decisions, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items will be closed today at 6 p.m. I urge interested delegations to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia): Speaking in its capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on Disarmament, my delegation, on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, would like to request the postponement of the Committee's deliberations of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 until sometime next week, since this is the first time that the First Committee is addressing the medium-term plan. Taking into account the complex nature of the subprogramme on disarmament included therein, we believe that ample time should be made available for informal consultations among delegations.

The Chairman: I have taken note of the statement.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations
A/C.1/51/PV.4

General Assembly

Fifty-first session

Official Records

First Committee

4th Meeting
Tuesday, 15 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou .... (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Sir, at the outset please allow me, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to extend congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of this important Committee. I am confident that your diplomatic skill and long experience will lead the Committee's work to a successful conclusion.

Since the collapse of the cold-war structure, new and positive changes have taken place in international relations, and some progress has also been made in the efforts of the international community to achieve disarmament and security. However, the new hope of the international community for disarmament and security after the end of the cold war has not yet been realized. Lack of confidence between countries and nations has given rise to aggravated tensions and armed conflicts in several parts of the world, endangering international security and peace and increasing international arms transfers and the arms race.

The most pressing issue in disarmament following the end of the cold war is the realization of complete nuclear disarmament. Even today, after the collapse of the bipolar structure of East-West confrontation, the nuclear-weapon States have not discarded the outdated doctrine that nuclear weapons serve as a deterrent to war. They try to justify the existence of nuclear weapons and refuse to display a will to abolish nuclear weapons unconditionally.

What is important in achieving nuclear disarmament is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, together with a nuclear- test ban and the suspension of the production of nuclear weapons. The elimination of nuclear weapons is not a question of method and procedure. It is a question of the will and determination of nuclear-weapon States to dismantle all nuclear weapons unconditionally and completely, in keeping with the desire of humankind. As long as even one nuclear weapon remains on the Earth, humankind can not escape the nuclear threat.

Nuclear-weapon States should give non-nuclear-weapon States an unconditional assurance of the non-use of nuclear weapons against them. They should also set a detailed timetable for eliminating nuclear weapons and implement it without reservations.

At present, arms transfers and the increased arms race resulting therefrom have become one of the root causes of threats to world peace and security. Arms exports by the developed countries to the developing countries are increasing remarkably and are aggravating the overall international situation, in particular in regions with ongoing disputes.

At the same time, the modernization and sophistication of military equipment are being actively accelerated under the cover of disarmament, while joint research, development and production of modern military hardware is being carried out in the developed countries. This is a great threat to international peace and security and stimulates the arms race between countries.

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum

Regional peace and security play an important role in ensuring international security. Since the end of the cold war, signs of trends towards relaxation and cooperation have been witnessed in several parts of the world. But Asia, and in particular north-east Asia, remains the most unstable region because there the legacy of the cold war still exists. Military collusion between the United States and Japan and the United States and South Korea has come out into the open on the Korean peninsula and in its vicinity. Meanwhile, large-scale joint military exercises aimed at expanding their spheres of influence are being conducted under the pretext of strengthening security regimes.

At present, the undisguised attempt by Japan to acquire nuclear armaments and convert its country into a military Power constitutes a most dangerous element in north-east Asia. Today, when the balance of power has been destroyed, Japan, together with the United States, is attempting to expand the scope of application of Japanese-United States defence cooperation and tightening military ties with South Korea, advocating the theory of contingency with regard to its country and, in particular, that of an "emergency" on the Korean peninsula.

The typical example of this is Japan's attempt, in alliance with the United States, to develop a theatre missile-defence system and to establish the Japan-United States of America security-industry forum, in disregard of strong opposition from our country and the other Asian countries.

Such a move by Japan gives rise to serious concern not only among the Korean people but in other Asian countries as well. It will stoke the arms race in the region and finally lead to an extreme situation.

Japan should immediately abandon its attempt to become a military Power and achieve nuclear armament and instead atone and apologize for its past aggressive crimes and make an honest, sincere post-war settlement.

Ensuring peace and security on the Korean peninsula is a vital issue directly linked to peace in Asia and the world. Confidence-building between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States is a prerequisite to removing the threat of war and ensuring lasting peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

The sincere implementation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Framework Agreement is the essential for building confidence between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States today. That Agreement, which was adopted two years ago and is now under implementation, has opened up prospects for the fair resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and for confidence-building between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. The great leader comrade Kim Il Sung said that the key to the resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula lies in confidence-building between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States and the provision of a light-water reactor system.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Framework Agreement specifies in detail the issues surrounding the replacement of our graphite-moderated reactor system with a light-water system and normalization of political and economic relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

Within one month of the date of the Framework Agreement, we froze most of our graphite-moderated reactors and related nuclear facilities under the terms of the document and have since then allowed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to monitor the freeze.

In December last year, the supply contract for the light- water reactor project was concluded between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO), organized under the auspices of the United States leadership, and ad hoc, routine IAEA inspections of facilities that are not subject to the freeze were resumed in January this year.

Recently, European countries, including Germany and France, and certain Latin American countries, including Argentina, with a correct understanding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Framework Agreement, have been taking a positive attitude towards implementation of the Agreement.

In order to ensure the fundamental resolution of the nuclear issue through the full implementation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Framework Agreement, it is important for the United States to respect sincerely its obligations, including the alleviation of economic sanctions, subject to the Agreement.

In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Framework Agreement, both sides agreed to reduce trade and investment barriers, including restrictions on telecommunications services and financial transactions, within three months of the date of the signing of the document.

In order to establish confidence between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, the United States should implement its commitment under the Framework Agreement, and the present confrontational relations between the two countries should be converted into relations based on confidence.

Furthermore, the international community, in particular countries around the Korean peninsula, should refrain from putting the brakes on implementation of the Framework Agreement. The non-friendly policy towards our country consistently pursued by certain countries can be of no help for the settlement of the issue. If the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is resolved fundamentally through the implementation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Framework Agreement, it will no doubt help remove regional tensions and establish confidence, thus contributing to the maintenance of world peace.

For the full implementation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Framework Agreement, which has entered a new stage, peace and security should be ensured on the Korean peninsula. To ensure durable peace and security on the Korean peninsula and build confidence between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States today, a new peace mechanism should be established to replace the outdated armistice system. That system, under which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States have warring relations, has no function in preventing any unforeseen outbreak of armed conflicts or war, due to the completely paralysed armistice supervisory tools. As long as it remains in place, the danger of war will never be removed, and, accordingly, mistrust between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States will not be eliminated either.

Forty-three years have elapsed since the end of war in Korea, but durable peace has not yet prevailed on the Korean peninsula.

The United States concluded the United States-South Korea military treaty soon after the signing of the Armistice Agreement, which meant total rejection of the Armistice Agreement. And the United States breached subparagraph 13 of the Armistice Agreement, which provides for cessation of the introduction into Korea of military equipment and combat material, and instead increased armed forces on a large scale and even introduced nuclear weapons, thus turning South Korea into the largest arsenal in the world.

The Armistice Agreement and armistice supervisory bodies were totally paralysed by the United States.

In 1956 the United States obstructed the activities of a Neutral Nations Inspection Team. Moreover, it appointed a General of the South Korean Army, who has neither qualification nor power, as senior member of the United Nations forces membership of the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) in 1991. Thus, the function and role of the Military Armistice Commission were completely paralysed.

In this situation, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea advanced a proposal in April 1994 calling for the replacement of the outdated armistice system with a new peace system.

However, even today, more than two years later, the United States still refuses to respond to our proposal. Instead, it deploys huge armed forces in South Korea and continues to stage large-scale war drills in place of "Team Spirit" joint military exercises. Meanwhile, the South Korean authorities, while engaging in an arms build-up, have turned the southern portion of the Military Demarcation Line into an acute war border zone instead of a buffer zone, and the Demilitarized Zone into a completely militarized and heavily armed zone.

Given the dangerous situation on the Korean peninsula at least an institutional device should be established to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict and war. Proceeding from this need, in February this year the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea put forward a proposal to sign an interim agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States in order to prevent the outbreak of any armed conflict or war on the Korean peninsula.

That interim agreement covers issues concerning the management of the Military Demarcation Line and the Demilitarized Zone, ways of addressing cases of armed conflict and accidents, the composition, duties and terms of reference of a joint military body and other issues related to the maintenance of security and order. It also deals with the issue of the establishment and operation of a Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States joint military body in Panmunjŏm to implement and supervise the proposed interim agreement, replacing the Military Armistice Commission.

The proposed interim agreement shall take the place of the Armistice Agreement until the conclusion of a full peace agreement.

This proposal made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a reasonable one, initiated in view of the current status of Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States relations and the situation on the Korean peninsula, which is approaching an unexpected phase.

In July this year, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, through the statement of the spokesman for the Panmunjŏm Mission of the Korean People's Army, proposed to the United States forces side the resumption of working negotiations for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States general-level talks. It aims to establish, at an early date, a legitimate military channel of contact to prevent the imminent danger of accidental armed conflict before the signing of a peace agreement is discussed.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States are signatories to the Korean Armistice Agreement, and the United States has the real decision-making power on matters of security in South Korea. The tentative agreement will therefore, when signed by both sides, no doubt represent a breakthrough in negotiations on a permanent peace agreement.

The existence of the United Nations Command in South Korea is a great obstacle to peace and security on the Korean peninsula. The United Nations Command in South Korea was not established by a United Nations resolution. At present, only United States troops remain in the United Nations Command, which was moved towards dissolution without any post-war United Nations resolutions. This fact shows that the "US-ROK Joint Command" is misusing the helmet of the United Nations forces and the United Nations flag.

We hope that the international community will pay due attention to the implementation of resolution 3390 (XXX) B, which was adopted by the General Assembly at its thirtieth session, and which called for the dissolution of the United Nations Command in South Korea, the replacement of the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement, and measures to take back the name and flag of the United Nations from United States troops in South Korea.

Korea should be reunified in order to ensure solid peace and security on the Korean peninsula. Peace and security on the Korean peninsula cannot be ensured if the division of the country and nation, which began in the 1940s, continues. The great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, who devoted his whole life to the cause of the country's reunification, put forward a proposal for national reunification through confederation. He also advanced the "Ten-point Programme of Great Unity of the Whole Nation for Reunification of the Country", which aimed at achieving the country's reunification through the unity of the whole nation, based on the national independent spirit.

The proposal for national reunification through confederation represents a feasible way of reunifying the country, on the basis of recognizing the differing ideologies and systems that have existed in the North and the South for almost half a century, since the national division forced by foreign forces. It would be based on the principle of neither side conquering or being conquered by the other, and on the promotion of national reconciliation. We will make every possible effort to implement the DPRK-United States Framework Agreement, establish a new peace mechanism and achieve the country's reunification.

Peace is the ideal, the desire, and the position constantly advocated by the Government of the DPRK. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will do its best to discharge its responsibility and duty according to the ideals of its foreign policy of independence, friendship and peace, by actively joining the efforts of the international community to realize comprehensive and complete disarmament and ensure international peace and security.

Our delegation expresses its hope that this Committee will conclude its work successfully in conformity with the desire of humankind for a free and peaceful new world.

Mr. Bustani (Brazil): Allow me to express the satisfaction of my delegation in seeing you, Sir, a respected diplomat from Belarus, as Chairman of the First Committee. We are sure that under your skilful guidance we will be able to advance the cause of disarmament and international security. I would also like to pay a tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun, the former Permanent Representative of Mongolia. His tireless dedication to disarmament and to the United Nations is an inspiration for all of us.

As many Heads of Delegation pointed out during the general debate in plenary meetings of the General Assembly, the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 24 September 1996 marked an important moment. For the first time in 51 years, we may reasonably hope that humankind has witnessed the last of the nuclear-weapon test explosions — those dreadful, dangerous preparations for mass slaughter.

Already, even before its entry into force, the CTBT constitutes a powerful impediment to the holding of nuclear tests anywhere in the world. According to the law of treaties, it implies a moral — and, indeed, juridical — obligation on the part of nuclear-weapon States to forgo all nuclear testing. We can only rejoice at this. Brazil has campaigned for the prohibition of nuclear tests since 1962, when we took our seat at the opening of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (ENDC), the forerunner of the Conference on Disarmament. Indeed, the distant ancestor of the present Treaty is the eight-Power memorandum on a nuclear-test ban submitted by the neutral members of the ENDC: Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sweden and the United Arab Republic.

That initiative was perhaps ahead of its time — but history has vindicated us. As the recent reaction against nuclear testing showed, even within the nuclear-weapon States, civil society is increasingly questioning whether nuclear weapons are worth their risks and ever-increasing costs. The CTBT was never conceived as the end of the road. We were encouraged by the statement given by the President of the United States to the General Assembly in which he said that the CTBT

> "points us towards a century in which the roles and risks of nuclear weapons can be further reduced and ultimately eliminated." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 1)*

We wholeheartedly agree with that statement. The twenty-first century must be the one in which the only weapon capable of eliminating life on Earth will itself be eliminated, and sooner rather than later.

I wish to share some of our thoughts on why this possibility is getting closer and closer. The Permanent Representative of Brazil, Ambassador Celso Amorim, had the honour to be invited by the Australian Government to be member of the Canberra Commission, which was charged with the task of conducting a thorough study of the question of the elimination of nuclear weapons. His fellow members of the Commission included diplomats, scientists, academics, politicians and military officers, including some who had had direct command over nuclear arsenals — control over the instruments of Armageddon. In geographical and professional terms, it was as diverse a group as one could possibly expect.

Their task included conducting a serious and balanced study of the security implications of nuclear disarmament. It was not a starry-eyed, idealistic exercise. The maintenance of strategic stability and the principle of undiminished security for all were always emphasized. Nevertheless, the conclusions of the Canberra Commission were unanimous and unequivocal. Nuclear weapons diminish the security of all States, including the States that possess them. They have no military utility other than that of deterring a comparably equipped opponent from using them. The continuation of the present situation, however, poses intolerable risks. The only way to reduce these risks is a progressive series of steps that would lead to complete elimination of that category of weapons.

I will not reproduce here the arguments and counter-arguments discussed by the Commission or outline the proposals and stages towards nuclear disarmament that it recommended. These can be found in the text of the report of the Canberra Commission.

In this context it is important to add that the International Court of Justice unanimously determined that there is a legal obligation not only to negotiate in good faith measures for nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, but also to bring those negotiations to a conclusion — that is to say, to eliminate nuclear weapons. The landmark Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice constitutes a new term of reference for all the efforts of the international community towards nuclear disarmament.

Brazil, which has already ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, would like to reinforce the appeal for its universal ratification. While we welcome the continued commitment of President Clinton and President Yeltsin with regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention, we urge the United States and the Russian Federation to expedite their ratification of the Convention. Without the two declared chemical Powers, a reassessment of the procedures, mechanisms and time-frames of the Organization on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons may be inevitable.

Brazilian peacekeepers gained first-hand experience of the suffering created by the indiscriminate use of landmines in our sister nations of Mozambique and Angola, as well as in Central America. While the international community works for the ultimate goal of the elimination of anti-personnel landmines, all States should abide by the humanitarian restrictions imposed by the Convention on

Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). We would like to stress the importance of strengthening the authority of and ensuring wider participation in the CCW Convention. Ratification by all States of the amended Protocol II on landmines, as well as of the new Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons, is essential.

It is particularly important to keep landmines out of the hands of those who do not respect international humanitarian law. To this end, the Foreign Minister of Brazil announced, in his opening statement in the general debate, a unilateral, renewable four-year moratorium on the export of all anti-personnel landmines. Brazil also supports stronger efforts to combat clandestine trafficking in small arms and light weapons. In recent years we have learned the dangers associated with the links between arms smuggling, drug trafficking and terrorism. Closer cooperation to thwart international criminal organizations involved in arms trafficking is one of the new priorities on the world security agenda.

To return to nuclear issues, I would now like to present a proposal that Brazil and other countries will introduce in the First Committee this year. It is a draft resolution on a "nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas".

In several parts of the world the nuclear option has already been ruled out. This is a most significant development. Nuclear-weapon-free zones have been established in Latin America, through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and subsequently in the South Pacific, through the Treaty of Rarotonga; in South-East Asia, through the Treaty of Bangkok; and in Africa, through the Treaty of Pelindaba.

With the addition of the Antarctic Treaty, these treaties are freeing from nuclear weapons the peoples of the southern hemisphere, as well as those in the adjacent areas north of the Equator where the treaties apply. This fact led to our initiative, which aims at achieving recognition by the General Assembly of the emergence of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas. Many countries have expressed support for the initiative. The draft resolution expresses a legitimate concern of nuclear-weapon-free countries, which cover more than half of the surface of the world, and which are entitled to be spared from the threat of nuclear weapons. We consider recognition of the nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas as confirmation of the international commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament.

In addition, the promotion of the idea that most of the globe is nuclear-weapon-free will undoubtedly have effect as an example and add impetus to the process of nuclear disarmament and to the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Although our initiative will not by itself create new legal obligations, it is aimed at recalling the need to respect existing commitments under nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and their protocols, to ask all relevant States that have not yet done so to ratify such treaties and protocols, and to call upon them to consider further proposals for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

The most direct effect of our initiative might be to imprint upon the public consciousness the image of a globe already free from the scourge of nuclear weapons over more than half of its surface. It is a powerful and suggestive idea — powerful because it is simple, and suggestive because it indicates a tendency towards gradually extending the nuclear-weapon-free areas until they cover the whole world. We ask all States to join in sponsoring and to support that draft resolution.

Mrs. Kurokochi (Japan): I should like to begin by extending to you, Sir, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, my warm congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you lead the important work of this Committee.

I would like at the outset to express the deep satisfaction of my Government, that, after two and a half years of negotiations in Geneva, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was adopted at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly with the support of the overwhelming majority of Member States. Japan, together with other like-minded countries, made strenuous efforts to achieve the conclusion and adoption of the CTBT. Underscoring the significance of the Treaty, Prime Minister Hashimoto himself signed it on 24 September, the very day on which it was opened for signature. The CTBT is indeed a historic milestone in the effort to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

To date, 124 countries have signed the Treaty, which is clear testimony to the strength of international support for the prohibition of nuclear testing. Japan is confident that, in the light of the adoption of the Treaty, and given the widespread support that it enjoys, nuclear testing will never again be conducted anywhere in the world. My Government strongly hopes that as many countries as possible will sign and ratify the Treaty. In particular, we would like to call upon those countries that have expressed opposition to the Treaty to reconsider their position so that it can enter into force at the earliest possible date.

For its part, Japan will make every effort to contribute to the early and smooth establishment of an international system under the CTBT for the prohibition of nuclear testing. Today I would like to refer to a few examples of the efforts the Government of Japan will make towards that end. First, Japan is ready to provide a knowledgeable and experienced person to fill a senior-level post in the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the CTBT Preparatory Commission; and secondly, Japan is ready to make a prompt financial contribution to the Preparatory Commission to ensure its smooth establishment and operation. In addition, as Prime Minister Hashimoto said in his statement to the General Assembly last month, Japan will expand technical cooperation to concerned developing countries on seismic technologies, which comprise an essential part of the International Monitoring System for the detection of nuclear explosions. Japan is making these efforts in pursuit of its consistent approach: to make realistic, step-by-step progress on nuclear disarmament, with the aim of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

Permit me now to comment on other nuclear disarmament issues. First, I would like to stress the importance of the review process following the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Based on last year's decision on strengthening the review process of the Treaty, together with the decision to extend the Treaty, we should explore ways to move forward on the issues listed in the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament at the Preparatory Committee meetings to commence next year for the year-2000 review conference.

In an effort to contribute to making the review process as productive as possible, Japan will hold an international seminar on the theme of nuclear disarmament after the indefinite extension of the NPT, in Kyoto in early December. It is hoped that this seminar will facilitate the smooth start of the preparatory process for the next NPT review conference by providing an arena for a frank and in-depth exchange of views between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States in order to identify the future direction of nuclear disarmament efforts.

Secondly, I would like to comment on the issue of a cut-off with respect to fissile materials. As Prime Minister Hashimoto and Foreign Minister Ikeda have stressed, now that the CTBT has been adopted and opened for signature, Japan believes that negotiations on a cut-off treaty should commence as soon as possible at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Japan, for its part, continues to work towards this end. In this connection, I would point out that the Conference on Disarmament, in fact, decided by consensus in 1995 to establish an ad hoc committee for negotiations on such a treaty.

Thirdly, nuclear disarmament is an issue of common concern for the international community as a whole. As such, it demands the attention of all States, not just those which possess nuclear weapons. Thus, it is important to foster a spirit of mutual trust and constructive cooperation between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. For this purpose, we should strengthen the functioning and credibility of international disarmament bodies such as the Conference on Disarmament and the First Committee.

Japan will endeavour to promote realistic and feasible measures in order to facilitate further progress at the Conference on Disarmament towards nuclear disarmament. A cut-off treaty is certainly an important objective, but it is not the only one. Japan believes that the Conference on Disarmament should provide a forum to explore possible avenues for further nuclear disarmament — which is, in fact, one of the items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

Fourthly, let me express our satisfaction at the withdrawal of all nuclear warheads from Ukraine and, shortly, from Belarus. These accomplishments are clear examples showing that arms control and disarmament efforts are in progress, as promised.

Problems relating to other weapons of mass destruction also demand our attention. In this regard, we hope that the upcoming Fourth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention will prove fruitful so that the ad-hoc group may make further progress in its current work, including the drafting of a rolling text.

Japan welcomes the fact that the Chemical Weapons Convention will soon go into effect. However, it notes that many countries, including the United States and Russia, have not yet ratified it. Japan strongly hopes that these countries will ratify it as soon as possible, and certainly before it enters into force.

While the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction cannot be overemphasized, we must also address the problems posed by conventional weapons, particularly in the light of the fact that they are actually being used in conflicts that are raging in various parts of the world today. Since the end of the cold war, world attention has been focused particularly on landmines, which have been called weapons of mass destruction in slow motion. It has been estimated that there are more than 100 million landmines remaining in the ground in various parts of the world. Each month they claim the lives of more than 800 people and injure thousands of others. Most of their victims are innocent civilians. This is above all a humanitarian problem, but the presence of landmines also creates obstacles to economic and social reconstruction in regions that have been torn apart by military conflict.

In Japan's view, it is important to take measures in the following four areas: first, in the strengthening of international restrictions on landmines; secondly, in mine-clearance activities by the United Nations and other organizations; thirdly, in the development of technologies for mine detection and clearance; and fourthly, in assistance for the rehabilitation of victims. With regard to the first point, restrictions, Japan intends to ratify the new Protocol II of the Chemical Weapons Convention at an early date, and is supporting international efforts towards a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. In order to strengthen international efforts in the other three areas, Japan is preparing to convene an international conference at the senior-official level. It is tentatively set for May 1997, in Tokyo.

I would like in this connection to refer to the international strategy conference that was organized by Canada this month. Initiatives such as these are important in strengthening and promoting international cooperation on this vital issue.

The excessive accumulation of small arms is another problem demanding our attention. Japan appreciates the progress made in the United Nations on the basis of General Assembly resolution 50/70 B, on which Japan took an initiative last year. We are gratified that the panel of governmental experts established by the Secretary-General is making progress on this grave problem, and we look forward to the panel's report, which the Secretary-General will transmit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

In the effort to enhance transparency in armaments, Japan attaches importance to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, among whose goals is the prevention of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons. Again, Japan calls upon States which have not yet done so to participate in the Register. In accordance with resolutions that have been adopted in the past, the Secretary-General will convene next year a group of governmental experts to consider ways of further developing the Register. We hope that the group will come up with realistic and effective proposals.

Finally, I would like to comment briefly on the significant contributions which the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament are making towards enhancing regional dialogue and promoting confidence. Japan particularly appreciates the contributions of the Kathmandu Centre, one of several such facilities in Asia and in the South Pacific, and will continue to extend assistance in support of its activities.

The year 1996 will surely be remembered as a landmark year in terms of progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I trust that in the closing months of this memorable year the First Committee will continue to build upon this progress towards the realization of a safer world. I can assure the Committee that this is an endeavour to which Japan pledges its full support.

Before concluding, I am obliged to speak in response to the many unfounded accusations made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regarding Japan's defence posture. I regret to have to do this, but I will make only four points.

The first point is with regard to Japan's so-called attempts to become a military Power. I would like to state the following: Based on the concept of possessing a basic defence force rather than aiming at directly countering a military threat to the country, Japan is to possess the minimum necessary level of basic defence capability as an independent nation so that it will not become an unstable element in the region by creating a power vacuum. The Government of Japan is now striving for an effective and moderate defence build-up in accordance with this concept. While our main equipment should be basically replaced and modernized, we are making an even greater effort to seek efficiency and rationalization in terms of organization, force structure and equipment. But this posture will never pose a threat in the region.

On the second point regarding Japan-United States cooperation on defence matters, I would like to state the following: Japan-United States security arrangements are intended to contribute to the security of Japan and to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East. The recent developments in Japan-United States security relations, including the joint declaration of April this year, in no way change the structure of the Japan-United States security treaty or expand its geographical application. As the declaration says, we consider that the solid Japan-United States alliance and the United States military presence have contributed and will continue to contribute to stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

With regard to the third point on nuclear disarmament, I would like to emphasize that Japan is not currently developing and will never develop nuclear weapons. We have continually expressed our position on this issue. Japan will never possess nuclear weapons for several reasons. First, with regard to security, the possession of nuclear weapons would only destabilize the international environment around Japan. In this context, I note that our main purpose is to maintain peace and prosperity in Japan and throughout the world. Secondly, in respect of Japan's non-nuclear principles, both in policy and legally Japan excludes the option of nuclear weapons. In policy, Japan strictly upholds the three non-nuclear principles. Legally, both internationally and domestically, Japan is committed to legislation prohibiting nuclear weapons. Internationally, Japan is a State Party to the NPT, and domestically, Japan's Atomic Energy Basic Law restricts all nuclear activities to strictly peaceful purposes. Thirdly, Japan's national public sentiment is another important reason why it is totally unthinkable for Japan to shift its policy on nuclear weapons. The Japanese people, the only people in the world who have been the victims of atomic bombs, would be vehemently opposed to Japan possessing nuclear weapons.

The fourth and final point refers mainly to the last war. In this connection, I would like to state that last year, in commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war, the Government of Japan expressed deep remorse for the tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries caused by Japan's colonial rule and aggression. The Government of Japan continually endeavours to obtain other countries' understanding of Japan's recognition of history.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to begin by extending to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We wish you every success in your work. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, as well as my profound gratitude to Ambassador Erdenechuluun for the intelligent way he guided the proceedings of the Committee at the last session.

During the past year, several important and promising events have taken place in connection with the disarmament process, although there have also been some setbacks. With this picture in mind, my delegation wishes to put on record its position regarding several among the many items that the Committee will have to deal with. They are as follows. First, during the various Rio Group summit meetings, our Heads of State or Government have recalled that the Latin American and Caribbean region was established as the first nuclear-weapon-free zone on the basis of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and reiterated the urgent need for the international community to prohibit forever the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as the need to eliminate nuclear arsenals, whose continued existence poses an imminent danger for humankind. Ecuador sees this as the only appropriate path if we are to achieve the objective for which the international community has been struggling, namely general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

In this regard, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was opened for signature by the General Assembly, and which has been signed by the five nuclear Powers as well as by the overwhelming majority of other countries, including Ecuador, is an important step towards that objective. Although it is true that it leaves the door open for nuclear tests that do not involve explosions and might help qualitatively to improve and modernize nuclear weapons, the international community's acceptance of this instrument indicates that all countries will promote the disarmament process, will contribute to confidence-building among nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States, and will fundamentally strengthen declarations regarding moratoriums on testing and help avoid harm to the human race and the environment caused by nuclear tests. All of this makes it appropriate to examine with special care the prospect of this instrument entering into force and effectively opening the way to new achievements in this field.

An important complementary element to the Treaty should be the cessation of the production and stockpiling of fissionable material for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices. Ecuador is confident that there will soon be serious negotiations on this issue.

Second, Ecuador considers that this Committee must undertake an exhaustive study of the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in response to the request contained in resolution 49/75 K, and that, *inter alia*, the General Assembly should endorse the unanimous views of the Court criteria, in particular the view that:

> "There is in neither customary nor conventional international law any specific authorization of the threat or use of nuclear weapons" (*A/51/4, para. 182*).

This norm should serve as the basis for promoting the action needed to implement the

> "obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." (*Ibid.*)

This is an essential legal basis for the General Assembly to accelerate the process of nuclear disarmament and to strengthen the basic rules of international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, Ecuador has consistently emphasized the need for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. This is why we welcome the important Brazilian initiative to promote recognition of the fact that the Antarctic Treaty and the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba are gradually converting the entire southern hemisphere and adjacent areas into nuclear-weapon-free regions. We appeal to the signatories of those instruments to adopt the necessary measures in order to consolidate the region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Fourthly, Ecuador reiterates the importance of Security Council resolution 984 (1995), which takes note

> "of the statements made by each of the nuclear-weapons States ... in which they give security assurances against the use of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear-weapon States that are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons". *(resolution 984 (1995), para.1)*

We believe that this resolution is a measure which, *inter alia*, calls for serious negotiations on an international treaty that, while safeguarding the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of non-nuclear-weapon States, would make it a binding obligation for States to refrain from using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

Fifth, the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group have also called repeatedly for a prompt prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, in particular chemical, bacteriological, toxin and radiological weapons.

The Chemical Weapons Convention soon enter into force; for this purpose, the ratification by just one State is required. Nonetheless, for the entry into force to be truly beneficial, all the States that possess this type of weapon should be parties to the instrument.

Ecuador subscribed to the Additional Protocol IV adopted in the first part of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons, which prohibits the use and transfer of laser weapons that are specifically designed to cause permanent blindness. We consider that this instrument should be accepted by all States, because the danger of the dissemination and use of these weapons is immense, especially if they should fall into the hands of terrorist groups or drug traffickers.

Sixth, Ecuador wishes to reiterate once again that it believes that regional disarmament should be complemented by measures and initiatives for conventional disarmament at the global level, bearing in mind that it is the big Powers that have the greatest conventional military might in the world. Moreover, we must not forget the great imbalances in weaponry among States in the same region, which, far from promoting greater security for those who have the weapons, ends up accelerating the arms race and causing insecurity for all. Furthermore, these imbalances mean that countries possessing the greatest military forces spurn the peaceful settlement of disputes and rely only the use of force.

The Register of Conventional Arms is an appropriate measure aimed at bringing about transparency in the acquisition of military equipment. For it to be fully effective, it must be universally accepted. Ecuador is providing the information required under the Register.

Seventh, as regards the prohibition of the dumping of radioactive waste, I must state that Ecuador is a party to the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. In this context, the Ecuadorian Government has communicated to the secretariat of that Convention that, pursuant to article 4 of the Convention, it had decided

> "to prohibit completely the import of hazardous wastes or other wastes for disposal or processing",

and requested that that decision be reported to the all parties to the Convention.

Furthermore, Ecuador supports the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of radiological weapons, which should include radioactive waste. In keeping with that position, we also support the preparation of strategies and measures aimed at reversing the effects of the deterioration of the environment.

Eighth, Ecuador supports the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. International events in recent years, including in the field of disarmament, show that there is a need to give decisive impetus to this entire process and, above all, to reach new commitments on the part of the States having the greatest responsibilities in this field.

We believe that, apart from the fundamental issue of nuclear disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, that special session should give particular attention to subjects related to conventional disarmament and, in particular, to the need for the international community to devote greater resources, released from the production and trafficking of weapons, to economic and social development.

Ninth, Ecuador believes that a fundamental aspect of promoting the disarmament process is confidence-building measures. There can be no doubt that every region has its own security characteristics. We must emphasize that the adoption of such measures and the creation of an environment of security, through, *inter alia*, the promotion of good-neighbourliness between States, constitutes an important contribution to transparency, mutual understanding and the strengthening of international relations. Bilateral and multilateral dialogue must be increased on the role of science and technology in the context of international security. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that the concept of security is not confined to military aspects alone but rather that it encompasses important political, social, economic and cultural aspects. Terrorism, drug trafficking, ethnic or religious confrontations, endemic underdevelopment and widespread poverty constantly conspire against security. Along the same lines, it is essential to settle international disputes exclusively by peaceful means so that agreements reached will be understandings based on justice and the law. As long as there is a climate of distrust and resentment stemming from the persistence of disputes among States, it will be very difficult to progress on the road towards disarmament.

Tenth, as regards the expansion of the composition of the Conference on Disarmament, while it is true that through decision CD/1406 that forum increased its membership to 61, with the admission of the so-called Group of 23, it is also true that many other States have been left out of the Conference, including Ecuador, which for some years now has been expressing its special interest in participating in the Conference. The Conference should reflect changes in the international situation, and it is therefore necessary for us to insist on this request, and we hope that it will receive a positive response from this Committee and, subsequently, from the Conference on Disarmament itself. In addition, it should be recalled that General Assembly resolution 50/72 C recognized the legitimate aspirations of all countries that have asked to be members of the Conference and urged that organ to re-examine the other candidatures that have been put forward through 1996.

Mr. Moher (Canada): Canada would like to join with others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. We will work with you and with other members of the Bureau and of the Committee to make this session as positive as possible.

As we begin the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, Canada believes that we are at a critical point in international activities designed to promote arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We are on the divide: one direction points to the continuing exploitation of the opportunities afforded by the end of the cold war; the other to a loss of momentum and a risk of retrograde steps.

There is no doubt that we have a well-deserved right to take pride in our achievements over the past years. But along with the our important successes — the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) — there is also a lingering sense of promise unfulfilled, of unfinished business.

It is true that the advances of the past five years — START I, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the NPT extension, nuclear-weapon-free zones in the South Pacific and Africa, and the CTBT — have far exceeded those of the past 50 years. At the same time, START II, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the CTBT are not yet in force and, to many countries, are less than perfect successes. More so than in past years, further progress on the non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament agendas seems a somewhat more remote prospect. Could it be that, through our own successes, we are moving beyond rhetorical objectives to challenge national security positions in a more direct manner? Can we continue to count on the post-cold-war and post-Gulf-war sense of commitment and urgency, and the political will that went with it? Canada believes that it is time to restore our energy, to reaffirm our commitments, and to look for leadership. With energy, commitment and leadership, we believe that much can be done.

Weapons of mass destruction remain what they have always been: weapons of mass destruction, whose use could only be contemplated in the most dire of circumstances. Ignoring the reality of their existence and the consequent need to reduce and eliminate the risks they pose is not an acceptable course of action. Our task is apparent: we must continue to reduce and eliminate these weapons.

In the nuclear field, START I, the NPT extension and the CTBT are insufficient in and of themselves. They are components of an ongoing dynamic and a progressive process as we move towards our declared goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. We must therefore press for continuous implementation of the START process, broadening it soon to include all nuclear-weapon States; we must begin work now on a fissile material cut-off convention, improve on existing nuclear security assurances, and build on and continue progress in the field of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In pursuing these ends, other possibilities will emerge and should be pursued. But those I have mentioned can be pursued now, while resisting emerging efforts to redefine the conceptual playing field, as well as initiatives to set out unrealistic, ideological expectations and frameworks. In this regard, the strengthened, comprehensive and qualitatively different NPT review process scheduled to begin next spring naturally holds great importance for Canada, not least because of its relevance for the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency as outlined in the NPT Principles and Objectives. But other forums, including the Conference on Disarmament, must be as fully employed as possible.

Similarly, the challenges in the chemical and biological and toxin weapons fields are well known. The Chemical Weapons Convention must enter into force, with the United States of America and the Russian Federation living up to expectations and to their obligations. We know that this will require concerted political will being exercised by each of them — but it must be done. The Fourth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention this November will give us an immediate opportunity to take stock, assess the challenges and establish a clear objective for our ongoing work to strengthen the Convention. We must not forget that a cult was able to use toxin weapons; and what a cult can do, nation-States can easily exceed if not constrained by mutual commitments and assurances. Canada will do its best to contribute to further progress in all of these areas.

Our natural tendency to focus on highly visible objectives in the fields of weapons of mass destruction and conventional disarmament should not lead us to ignore other possibilities. For example, several Canadian Prime Ministers, beginning with Pierre Trudeau in 1982 at the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, called for work to ban the development, testing and deployment of all weapons in space. Is this concept not worth further consideration? We believe that it is, and would like to see it pursued in the Conference on Disarmament.

Turning to conventional disarmament, we must ask ourselves another question: Where are we going and what are our objectives? Much good work has been done; many solid initiatives and exercises are under way. We should continue them while ensuring that we continue to set pragmatic, achievable and substantive objectives. Canada's perspective in that respect has long been governed by three considerations: transparency, dialogue and restraint. No one of these is viable by itself; each contributes to and depends upon the others. The end result must be tangible action. We can and should reinforce and enhance the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its regional counterparts; we must encourage dialogue on the basis of the data so generated; and we should promote further work on agreed frameworks for national restraint when and where appropriate. Canada considers that the proposed renewal of work on the Register of Conventional Arms and the greater ability of the Conference on Disarmament to devote energy to this field, building on work already done or under way, will give us an opportunity to focus and accelerate our common efforts.

This brings us to a vital and urgent issue: the achievement of a global ban on anti-personnel mines. In pursuing the objective of a global ban on anti-personnel mines, Canada continues to attach great importance to the earliest possible ratification of amended Protocol II of the *Convention on Certain* Conventional Weapons by as many States as possible. Pending a truly global ban on these weapons, amended Protocol II is a vital element in the overall campaign to reduce and eliminate the suffering which they cause. Canada itself is pursuing on an urgent basis the legal and other steps necessary to enable the national ratification of this instrument.

However, Canada, along with many other States, continues to believe that more must be done. To this end, senior officials from 74 countries and numerous international organizations and non-governmental organizations attended the recent international strategy conference, "Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines", held at Ottawa, from 3 to 5 October. The 50 participating countries endorsed the Ottawa Declaration, calling for the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines. The conference also developed an action plan which outlines many concrete activities which States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are willing to undertake to build the necessary political will to achieve a ban on anti-personnel mines. We shall request that these documents be circulated for the information of the Committee. It became clear over the course of the Ottawa conference that there was a critical mass of States willing to push forward now to conclude an international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines. Thus, in his closing speech, Canada's Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, challenged the international community to return to Canada by the end of 1997 to sign an international agreement banning anti-personnel mines, and pledged to work with other committed States to elaborate an anti-personnel mine ban text and to work with every like-minded State to bring it to fruition.

Many opponents of an immediate ban argue that anti-personnel mines are a security issue. Well, they are right. It is indeed a security issue: human security. And that security is shattered every 20 minutes, every day. The Ottawa conference demonstrated to us that there now exists the necessary momentum to put an end to this random and relentless evil. We are convinced that we need not and cannot wait for the ideal, a universal treaty, but should begin with a more limited membership. To capture all the States of the world is not realistic in the first instance. To capture the world's conscience is our goal. Our objective is a treaty which establishes the global norm against these hideous weapons: that the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines is to be banned forever. Several important and global arms control treaties started in such a limited way. Our ongoing challenge will be to make this treaty universal.

We believe that the establishment of December 1997 as a deadline for the conclusion of a treaty is both realistic and essential in terms of maintaining the unprecedented momentum for action. Such a treaty need not be complex. We must avoid the temptation to use as models treaties on strategic offensive weapons. This treaty must be fundamentally different, fundamentally simple. It is a treaty with both humanitarian and arms control objectives, about a weapon which is essentially defensive and whose use by one has little effect on the security of another.

We are pleased that Mr. Axworthy's initiative received the immediate support of the Secretary-General, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the hundreds of international and national non-governmental organizations represented at the conference. Canada is committed to the goal of a treaty to be signed by December 1997 and in force by the year 2000, and we are prepared to work with all other like-minded States to achieve that objective.

We have a straightforward choice. We can, as it has been put, "remove 110 million mines, an arm and a leg at a time", or we can act now. Canada has chosen to act. We invite all the countries of the United Nations to join with us in this effort so that when we return to this forum next year at this time, we will be moving to establish a new instrument for the protection of humanity.

In our work on the landmines issue, we have developed an extensive database on the national positions of Member States on the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines. We understand that no other solid source of information such as this exists at this time. We intend to circulate the database to all delegations in the coming weeks in order to validate the information contained in it. The database will be used as a tool to measure progress as we move towards a treaty, and eventually, as we move to implement the ban. We call for the cooperation of all Member States in this effort.

Canada also wishes to circulate to delegations a thought-provoking study which explores how verification information, training and analysis might be fused to facilitate decision-making and operational processes within the United Nations. The report focuses on ways in which the United Nations system, with its wide array of information sources, could better synthesize and analyse this information in a timely and effective fashion to support the decision-making process. We hope that this innovative study stimulates thinking and debate on how we can better structure the United Nations to meet the challenges of the next century.

We have before us a readily discernible and attainable series of valid and valuable objectives. Our current security environment is positive. We can work together to achieve those objectives. To do so, two basic preconditions are essential. We must avoid self-satisfied "status quo-ism" on the one hand and the glitter of ideological crusades on the other. Giving in to these will only lead to sterile debate and a failure to progress.

Secondly, we must generate and maintain the political will necessary to confront and overcome the real challenges before us. Canada hopes that this First Committee session, the subsequent session of the Conference on Disarmament and the review processes of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, together with other exercises, will move us in the direction of the continuing exploration and exploitation of the discernable and achievable opportunities for substantial progress before us.

Mr. Campbell (Australia): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Australian delegation, I extend to you and to your fellow Bureau members congratulations on your election. We look forward to working closely with you to expedite the work of the Committee.

The past several years have seen significant advances in the discussion and negotiation of disarmament issues. Despite our many differences we, the international community, working together in the Conference on Disarmament, here in this Committee and in a number of other forums, have made quite extraordinary progress. The recent record speaks for itself: a Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) now close to entering into force; the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); and the successful conclusion and opening for signature of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which removes the contentious and long-running issue of nuclear-test explosions from our agenda. We have adopted a strengthened landmines Protocol to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, and have commenced negotiations to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. In addition, the network of regional nuclear-weapon- free zones has been enhanced by the creation of new zones and the consolidation of existing ones.

Having recorded these significant achievements, the disarmament debate has now reached an important crossroads. Questions are being asked. Where do we go from here? What do we tackle next? How do we keep the momentum going? There are questions too about how to ensure that institutions and negotiating forums remain flexible and relevant. Perhaps most important of all, delegations are asking how the international community's interests and expectations with respect to the process of nuclear disarmament can be accommodated in the future disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

The answers to these questions should become clearer as we work through our agenda in the coming weeks. In my delegation's view, now is not the time to falter in the pursuit of a world free of weapons of mass destruction. Now is the time to capitalize further on the opportunities the ending of the cold war has presented us. Now is the time to build on recent achievements, to consolidate the institutions and instruments we have created, and to identify and move forward a new agenda, including new thinking on nuclear disarmament based on a realistic appraisal of what is practical and achievable.

There is no shortage of issues to address. The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs outlined several of these in his statement before the General Assembly.

We need to work to make the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons realize its full potential, as envisaged in last year's decision on strengthening the review process for the Treaty.

We must make the most of the opportunity offered to us by the coming NPT review Preparatory Committee if we are to reap the disarmament and non-proliferation benefits of the Treaty's indefinite extension.

We need to strengthen International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards by adopting expeditiously the proposed 93-plus-2 protocol in a form that provides the Agency with a truly effective means of detecting undeclared nuclear activities.

We need to ensure that the CWC commences operation as an effective disarmament and non-proliferation instrument, and to work for universal participation in the regime, including by the two possessor States.

We must reach early agreement on effective verification machinery for the Convention on biological weapons and must therefore allocate sufficient time and resources to these negotiations.

We need to start work on a convention to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. We also need to build on the commendable initiative of our Canadian friends to move forward in our efforts to negotiate a global ban on the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines, so that the appalling misuse of this weapon is meaningfully and comprehensively addressed.

There is much important and valuable work to be done here, work for which future generations will thank us. It would be tragic if the frustrations we have all at times felt as we worked towards the milestones already achieved were to lead us to hold some or all of this agenda hostage to these frustrations.

It was clear from the consultations the outgoing President of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Meghlaoui, had with regional groups that much thought is being given to the future programme and orientation of the Conference on Disarmament. While we do not underestimate the difficulty in reconciling the spectrum of views in the Ambassador's thoughtful and reflective report, there is clearly a need to reform and update the agenda for the Conference on Disarmament to ensure its continuing relevance and effectiveness.

Perhaps an appropriate starting point in the area of nuclear disarmament would be the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The report of the Commission, which we hope will be a valuable contribution to discussion and progress on these matters, recommends a political commitment by nuclear-weapon States to the elimination of nuclear weapons. It goes on to set out immediate and reinforcing steps towards that goal. It places a particular emphasis on the importance of effective verification in the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-weapon-free world and canvasses a possible role for the Conference on Disarmament in this area. We have been encouraged by the positive response the report has attracted from the international community.

The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs has presented the report of the Commission to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the General Assembly. It will be introduced to the Conference on Disarmament at its first session in 1997.

It is not my intention to further take up the Committee's time outlining Australia's position on the many issues on our agenda. We will have ample opportunity to do so in the weeks ahead. Rather, I would conclude my remarks by appealing to delegations to work together in a spirit of cooperation and with a sense of common purpose to continue to build on the progress we have already made.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I am confident that your extensive experience will enable you to guide our efforts to a successful conclusion this year, and I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I also wish to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun, for his able guidance of the work of this Committee during the fiftieth session.

This Committee is meeting today in a global climate of change and momentous political developments and events. We should use this climate to promote multilateral disarmament negotiations and an international awareness of the need to pursue sincere efforts, on both the global and regional levels, to achieve general and complete disarmament. I need not at this stage reiterate Egypt's priorities in the field of disarmament. These priorities are fully consistent with the outline and details of the priorities stated in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which was held in 1978. In that document, nuclear disarmament was accorded the highest possible priority, without prejudice to the importance of other questions of non-proliferation and conventional disarmament, which occupy a lower rank in disarmament priorities.

I should like to begin by referring to the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, which was delivered on 8 July 1996. This opinion unanimously recognized that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." *(A/51/4, para. 182)*

This advisory opinion demonstrates the conviction of the highest international judicial authority of the need to pursue nuclear disarmament in all its aspects. In this vein, Egypt, as coordinator of the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament, submitted last August, on behalf of 28 of the Conference members, the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons (CD/1419). We believe that this programme of work will make up for the lack of strong and explicit commitments relating to nuclear disarmament, especially on the part of the nuclear-weapon States. We also believe that this programme should be studied seriously in the Conference on Disarmament's Ad Hoc Committee on Nuclear Disarmament. In resolution 50/70P, the General Assembly called on the Conference on Disarmament to establish that Ad Hoc Committee, on a priority basis, to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

In this same context, I cannot fail to refer to the adoption of resolution 1996/14, dated 23 August 1996, by the Commission on Human Rights' Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, which affirms in its operative paragraphs that weapons of mass destruction and in particular nuclear weapons should have no role to play in international relations and thus should be eliminated. It further recommends that the relevant international forums, in particular the Conference on Disarmament, should immediately start negotiations on nuclear disarmament to reduce nuclear weapons globally within a phased programme, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, thus contributing to the enhancement of international peace and security and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and above all the right to life.

The immense destructiveness of nuclear weapons was made clear in the message of warning issued in the August 1996 report of the Canberra Commission. Its thrust is that the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is militarily redundant and dangerous. The report stated:

(spoke in English)

> "A central reality is that nuclear weapons diminish the security of all States. Indeed, States which possess them become themselves targets of nuclear weapons. The opportunity now exists, perhaps without precedent or recurrence, to make a new and clear choice to enable the world to conduct its affairs without nuclear weapons. A nuclear-weapon-free world can be secured and maintained through political commitment, and anchored in an enduring and binding legal framework."

(spoke in Arabic)

I should like to welcome the findings of the report of the Commission, of which I have the honour to be a member, and to thank the Government of Australia for sponsoring this initiative. I also wish to express our desire for serious consideration of the practical steps referred to therein.

All these resolutions, provisions and opinions reaffirm once again the clear resolve of the international community to pursue nuclear disarmament. It is therefore incumbent upon us to continue to give impetus to efforts aimed at achieving the universality of all international instruments relating to disarmament. In this regard, special attention should be accorded to achieving the universality of the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In this respect, we must refer to article VI of the Treaty, which imposes an obligation on all its parties to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

In this light, we regard the commencement of the work of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference, to be held in the year 2000, as an important phase. The Committee's efforts should be directed towards the issuing by the Review Conference of an integral consensus document instead of — as in most previous Review Conferences — merely issuing non-substantive declarations that only make clear the failure to reach general agreement on non-proliferation policies and on their relation to the priorities of disarmament. That endeavour should be coupled with the drafting of an international treaty on comprehensive security assurances from nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States. As has been stated by many countries, including Egypt, relying on a Security Council resolution based on unilateral declarations from nuclear-weapon States is not sufficient, especially in the light of the indefinite extension of the NPT last year, which gave it special and significant international status.

Egypt welcomed the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the Conference on Disarmament. In spite of the Treaty's shortcomings, which cast a shadow over its true comprehensiveness, we still consider it a step — though a limited one — in the right direction. It should be followed by additional steps towards the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament. Accordingly, at the resumed session of the General Assembly, Egypt voted in favor of resolution 50/245, adopting the Treaty and opening it for signature. Egypt signed the Treaty yesterday.

However, I should like to register here our discontent with the procedure by which the Treaty was brought from the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly. This procedure must not set a precedent. Equally, I should like to underscore the important role of the consensus basis on which the Conference on Disarmament — the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body — functions and takes its decisions.

Now that the Conference on Disarmament has finished its work on the CTBT, the next priority on its agenda must be the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. For our work in this regard to be of any relevance, it must serve to prevent both vertical and horizontal proliferation of these materials and must lead to tangible results. This dual objective cannot be achieved unless the existing stockpiles of weapon-grade fissile materials are given due consideration as an integral part of the negotiating process. Egypt believes that this matter is of great importance.

Egypt also believes in the great importance of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the globe. The concept in itself represents a useful tool for the promotion of the non-proliferation regime within the framework of article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is in this vein that we welcomed, and participated in, the tireless African efforts that culminated in the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed by the African States in Cairo which established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, and the adoption of the Cairo Declaration of last April, which reflected a number of African positions that bring the world one step closer to the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Regrettably, the Middle East lags far behind Africa in this regard, despite the repeated calls and resolutions for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. These began here in the First Committee in 1974, and the General Assembly has been adopting resolutions to this effect unanimously since 1980. Unfortunately, these resolutions have not yet been translated into reality. In this regard, we note the importance of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. I should like to reaffirm here that the mere adoption of this resolution was never an end in itself; what is required is its implementation. In this regard, the three nuclear-weapon States that cosponsored the resolution have a special responsibility.

These repeated resolutions, adopted over a period of more than 20 years, reflect the international community's concern at the existence in Israel of an advanced nuclear programme, that is not governed by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. We cannot afford any ambiguity in this regard, and we once again call on Israel, the only State in the Middle East that possesses nuclear facilities not governed by IAEA safeguards, to accede to the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards system of the IAEA. In this regard, Egypt welcomes the decisions of Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates to accede to the NPT. We also welcome the statement made before the General Assembly last month by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman on his country's decision to sign the Treaty. That signature would leave Israel as the only State — I repeat, the only State — in the region not to have acceded to the NPT despite its advanced nuclear capabilities, which are well known to the whole world.

We will continue to strive towards establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East within the framework of the broader initiative launched by President Mubarak in April 1990 calling for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from all nuclear weapons.

I now turn to the question of landmines, another priority on Egypt's disarmament agenda. Egypt is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. More than 22 million landmines have been planted in its soil by regional and extra-regional belligerents during the various international and regional conflicts that have taken place on Egypt's territory. In this light, I should like to register Egypt's position that the approach to the landmine problem must be comprehensive and all-encompassing. Measures to ban mines should be accompanied by serious and concrete steps geared towards clearing existing mines from affected countries. Countries that are unable to deal with this problem on their own must be provided with technical and financial aid, and the necessary advanced technology to enable them to overcome this tragic legacy must be transferred to them. It is useful here to refer to the Final Document of the Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, held in Geneva last May, which incorporated a paragraph on the role of States involved in the deployment of mines in the process of their clearance:

(spoke in English)

> "Recognizing the important role that the international community, particularly States involved in the deployment of mines, can play in assisting in mine clearance in affected countries through the provision of necessary maps and information and appropriate technical and material assistance to remove or otherwise render ineffective existing minefields, mines and booby-traps". *(CCW/Conf.I/16, annex C, p. 43)*

(spoke in Arabic)

One way to enhance and promote disarmament efforts is to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The delegation of Egypt believes that the General Assembly should agree, during its current session, on a specific date for the convening of that special session, at which point we could begin carefully preparing to formulate its agenda. In this regard, the convening of that session in 1998, or 1999 at the latest, would serve as a useful catalyst for the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000.

In conclusion, I should like to stress the importance of the continued efforts of the United Nations system in the field of disarmament. This collective endeavour must strive to achieve optimum coordination between the work of the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission, with a view to achieving complementarity in international towards general and complete disarmament.

In the light of past experiences, we call upon all States Members of the United Nations to cooperate in good faith in the implementation of all resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in respect to international legitimacy.

Mr. Hofer (Switzerland)(*interpretation from French*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and to assure you of my delegation's support during your mandate. Your accession to that high post is indeed fortunate, for you come from a region which, in the years to come, will be playing an important role in international security.

In taking stock of recent events in the sphere of security policy since the previous session of the General Assembly, my delegation notes with satisfaction that the process of transition towards a multipolar world is being accelerated by the integration of States into an ever-closer network of interdependence. One of the effects of this development is an intensification of multilateral dialogue. I note in this connection the recent expansion, on the institutional level, of the Conference on Disarmament to 61 members. Here, I should like to pay tribute to the representatives of South Africa, whose perseverance, flexibility and skill have contributed to this auspicious development.

Other successes have been achieved in the sphere of arms control and disarmament, such as progress towards the ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the continuation of negotiations on the establishment of a verification system in the area of biological weapons and the adoption of an improved Protocol on anti-personnel landmines.

These developments cannot conceal a negative corollary of movement towards a multipolar world. The greater freedom of action enjoyed by international protagonists — be they States or otherwise — is fraught with additional risks of insecurity. These may emerge from conflicts that had been masked by the previous balance. These new dangers, often rooted in the past, are of all the more concern because they may feed the illusion that easy solutions can be found in the use of force. Thus the progress made in the past 12 months, although impressive, is still not enough.

In this general debate I should like to take up two principal subjects: the future of nuclear disarmament and the ban on anti-personnel landmines, a subject to which the Swiss delegation will return in a separate statement.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, Switzerland's policy on this question is as follows. In general, my Government does not view disarmament as an abstract goal in and of itself, but rather as a means of consolidating international security. That goal can be achieved through the gradual establishment of a stable balance at an ever-lower level while attempting to achieve, as a final stage, the complete and universal dismantling of nuclear weapons.

The international community has adopted a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Notwithstanding its shortcomings, that Treaty must be regarded as a significant advance in global arms control, thus serving the goals pursued by my Government. Therefore, on 24 September of this year Switzerland signed the Treaty. By so doing the Swiss authorities expressed their firm hope that, despite the uncertainty surrounding its entry into force, the Treaty's adoption by the General Assembly signifies the end of all nuclear testing, whatever its nature or form.

With this Treaty we find ourselves at the end of one cycle of negotiations and at the beginning of a political process whose final objective is the universal ban on nuclear tests. However, we cannot in the long run be satisfied by a purely formal measure. For that reason, the Swiss authorities intend to participate fully in the work of the Preparatory Committee that has been mandated to establish a monitoring body for that Treaty.

The CTBT's limits reveal the need to pursue international efforts in the area of nuclear disarmament while respecting the criteria for security and stability. In this connection, we feel that we must resolutely devote ourselves to the implementation of the disarmament commitments undertaken with the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Here, Switzerland will join in the preparations for the Review Conference of that Treaty, which are getting under way this week in New York.

At the same time, the impetus created by the CTBT must be maintained. Within the Conference on Disarmament the logical consequence will be the opening of negotiations on a convention on the halt of the production of fissionable material for military purposes, known as the cut-off treaty.

The Swiss authorities are also following with interest all initiatives that can serve the goal of a safer world in which the possession of nuclear weapons will no longer be necessary. The recent progress made with the extension of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, South-East Asia and in the South Pacific is encouraging. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, as well as proposals for the elimination of nuclear weapons made by the Canberra Commission, are other examples.

There are other means of mass destruction. Regarding the ban on chemical weapons, we welcome the imminent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This will represent a significant step towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We do regret, however, that the two States that have acknowledged the possession of chemical weapons have not yet been able to ratify the Convention. Switzerland appeals for the ratification of this Convention by all States that have not yet done so.

The same holds true with regard to negotiations on biological weapons. The results achieved so far are too meagre. Thus, the Swiss authorities hope that the Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, which will be held at Geneva in November of this year, will provide a new impetus to that process.

In addition to the destructive potential of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, conventional weapons too create security problems. Here as well, the need to remedy the causes of conflicts and tensions remains primary. In the context of conventional weapons, one question to which we should devote our full attention is that of anti-personnel mines. Year after year, several thousand persons fall victim to these weapons or continue to be threatened by them, often long after conflicts have ended. Such a situation is intolerable. Only the unshakable political will of States to make rapid and substantial progress towards a total ban on anti-personnel mines and the establishment of real international coordination in the area of demining can put an end to the situation as it exists today.

Protocol II of the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, which deals with mines, has just been amended. The improvements made to the original text, though modest, are a step in the right direction. Thus, the Swiss Government hopes that the amended Protocol II will soon enter into force. In the view of my authorities, only a total ban on anti-personnel mines will enable us to overcome their devastating effect. The campaign for a total ban on anti-personnel mines must continue and be intensified. The Swiss Government will therefore join in any reasonable initiative aimed at such a ban, in keeping with the humanitarian goals of its foreign policy. Such an initiative was undertaken by the 50 States whose representatives met at Ottawa from 3 to 5 October of this year. At that meeting, the opinion was expressed that States favouring a total ban on anti-personnel mines must undertake without further delay to draw up the text of a convention on such a ban. The Swiss Government fully shares that opinion and will do all it can to ensure that it becomes fact.

Until such a treaty can be broadly ratified, it is important that States take action. The Swiss Government did so in November 1995, when it unilaterally and unconditionally renounced the use, manufacture, laying and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

Even were the international community able to take the courageous step of imposing a ban on anti-personnel mines, it would not have solved the problems created by the some 110 million landmines that are implanted throughout the world and that threaten the lives and physical safety of tens of thousands of innocent persons. In this context, demining assistance in the context of peacekeeping operations must be made a priority element of international cooperation. The responsibility of the United Nations within the framework of the maintenance of peace and international security makes it a natural candidate to coordinate such an undertaking. The Organization, however, will be able to carry out that mandate only when the international community decides to accord to demining assistance the global dimension it has hitherto lacked. Here, the debate on demining in the context of United Nations peacekeeping operations held by the Security Council on 15 August 1996 and the presidential statement of 30 August 1996 are encouraging signs.

In this connection, the Swiss Government will strengthen its contribution to the international demining assistance effort.

In conclusion, I should like to hail the crucial role being played by the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament in promoting international cooperation in the sphere of security policy and to reiterate Switzerland's determination to continue, insofar as it is able, to participate in those activities.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): Mr. Chairman, I would like to extend to you our congratulations on your election to preside over the First Committee. We are pleased to see the representative of neighbourly Belarus in that position of high responsibility. I also take this opportunity to add my congratulations to all the other officers of the Committee.

As a State that has proved by practical steps its desire to see the world free of nuclear weapons, Ukraine noted with satisfaction the fact that at its fiftieth session, on 10 September 1996, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/245, entitled "Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty" (CTBT). Our State was one of the many sponsors of that historic resolution. The excellent results of the vote constituted convincing evidence of the ability of the world community, at what can be called without exaggeration a historical juncture, to put aside its differences with regard to so basic a treaty as the CTBT and to reach agreement on one idea: to ban all tests in all spheres, and to set up a reliable non-discriminatory regime to monitor the implementation of the Treaty provisions.

However, we will soon have to emerge from this justified state of euphoria that has followed on the adoption of the resolution, for serious obstacles stand in the way of the Treaty's entry into force, obstacles similar to those that prevented approval of its draft version at the Conference on Disarmament.

We feel it necessary to emphasize that Ukraine views the CTBT as an international legal instrument that consolidates the end of the nuclear-arms race, hampers the so-called vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons and creates important and necessary prerequisites that add dynamism to the process of nuclear disarmament.

In this connection we would like to remind delegations that the processes of nuclear disarmament are developing before our very eyes and that in Ukraine that process was brought to its natural completion on 1 June 1996, an event that was solemnly announced by Leonid Kuchma, the President of our State. Therefore, assessments of the CTBT as the first step on the way towards nuclear disarmament and as purely a disarmament instrument sound somewhat strange to us.

In the meantime, the Treaty does not, for example, envisage the elimination of testing grounds, specialized scientific research laboratories or other infrastructures related to nuclear weapons. That is why we would also like to see the world community view the CTBT not as just another instrument in the field of nuclear disarmament but as one that creates preconditions for the realization of nuclear disarmament on a global scale.

An understanding of the role of the CTBT in the context of international law will help us to avoid excessive expectations for the CTBT and too many reservations with regard to its present language, which in turn will allow the world community to focus all its attention and efforts on the solution of the truly fundamental goal of the day, namely the elaboration of a global programme of stage-by-stage nuclear disarmament. Ukraine is among the countries calling for a serious approach to the solution of that priority objective. In this connection, I would remind delegations that in his statement at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, on 22 October 1995, our President put forward the idea of elaborating within the United Nations a programme of complete nuclear disarmament.

The establishment of an ad hoc committee on this matter within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament could be a practical step towards the implementation of that idea. Goal-oriented and productive work by the Conference on Disarmament in this connection would be the best way to change the attitude of the opponents of the CTBT and would encourage the process of its signature, ratification and subsequent entry into force. That in turn would bring us closer to our common goal of a world free from nuclear weapons.

In this context, we believe that the process of nuclear disarmament should be made more dynamic. The initiative put forward by the President of Ukraine with regard to the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe between the Baltic and the Black Seas is a logical step and an important move in the right direction. We believe that support for the idea of a non-nuclear Central Europe would promote an atmosphere of confidence between and among the States of the region and would prevent the emergence of new lines of division on the European continent. The creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe in addition to the zones existing in the regions of Antarctica, the South Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and Africa, would create the critical mass that could foster the process of global nuclear disarmament.

It would be fair to describe this year as crucial in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. On 17 June it adopted a long-awaited, historic decision on expanding the membership of that multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament and arms control. On behalf of Ukraine, a State that has become a full-fledged participant in the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to express gratitude to the delegations of the States that supported the desire of other countries, in particular my own, to influence the process of formulating agreements in such vital spheres as international security and disarmament. I am confident that the appearance of new full-fledged participants in the negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament will stimulate more active work in other Ad Hoc Committees besides the Ad Hoc Test-Ban Committee. For Ukraine, these are the Ad Hoc Committees on the elaboration of a convention on the elaboration of a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for military purposes, and on the elaboration of a multilateral agreement on security guarantees by nuclear States to non-nuclear-States, and the elaboration of a programme of global nuclear disarmament.

Ukraine supports the adoption by the First Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects of the amended version of Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices, which introduces prohibitions and stricter restrictions on the use of certain types of anti-personnel landmines, which have been called "weapons of mass destruction in slow motion".

The world community has many, and quite reasonable complaints with regard to the substance of the adopted document, since it does not create the required preconditions for overcoming the consequences of the humanitarian crisis a number of States are experiencing as a result of the broad-scale and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. It is evident that the introduction of a comprehensive prohibition of anti-personnel landmines is the very thing needed to solve the problems caused by the use of such conventional weapons. However, taking into account the present reality that many countries are not ready to review the role of anti-personnel landmines in their defence doctrines, it is expedient to work out a reliable international regime that would exclude the possibility of such mines being transferred to States whose populations have suffered from their use.

As for Ukraine, it neither produces nor exports anti-personnel landmines. We strictly observe the provisions of the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines of all kinds announced by our country on 1 September 1995. At the same time, Ukraine would support considering the issue of the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines within the relevant Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament.

At present, it is more than obvious that we need radically to change our approach to a solution to the problem of mine clearance. It is well known that each year in mine-clearance operations carried out under United Nations auspices a mere 100,000 anti-personnel landmines are discovered and deactivated, whereas, according to various estimates, two million to five million such landmines are placed. In addition, the clearance of one anti-personnel landmine costs $1,000, while its production costs only three dollars.

In this connection, Ukraine considers that mine-clearance operations in a given country are worthwhile only if a solid barrier can be erected against the delivery of landmines to the parties to the conflict in that country. Ideally, such operations should be conducted when the armed conflict has ceased and its causes have been dealt with by political means. In addition, the world community should immediately elaborate and begin to apply qualitatively new techniques of mine clearance, which could reduce by several increments the costs of clearing one mine, reduce the risks to human life and to the health of personnel, and lead to an acceleration of the mine-clearing process.

For its part, Ukraine is ready to dispatch special units of its military forces for demining operations under the auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations, and on a bilateral basis. These units will be able to take part in mine clearance only if the interested party will pay servicemen's salaries, cover their transportation costs and undertake to provide compensation in the event of a serviceman being injured or losing his life. However, even today, a Ukrainian bridging company is discharging its duty in the United Nations peacekeeping force in Angola, where the situation is extremely difficult because of the many landmines that force our servicemen to conduct simultaneous mine clearance operations. Ukrainian engineering units are also engaged in mine clearance in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. We have a centre for training mine clearance experts in the Ukrainian city of Kamenets Podolskiy, which has all the facilities needed for training foreign experts in this field.

Ukraine has always considered the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction as an important international instrument in the field of chemical disarmament. This a view reflects our wish that the Convention should be ratified by the United States and Russia, which have the largest part of the world's stockpiles of chemical weapons, before it enters into force. In our view, if the Chemical Weapons Convention were to enter into force before its ratification by those noted countries, it would lessen the practical importance of the Convention. However, we would not like the world community to consider the Convention as an instrument for the non-proliferation of chemical weapons, but rather as an instrument for their elimination.

At the national level, Ukraine is taking measures aimed at preparing Convention provisions for implementation by chemical enterprises, and is undertaking operations to find and identify the chemical weapons that were stored on its territory in previous years.

We are pinning great hopes on the Fourth Review Conference of Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction, scheduled for the end of this year. Strengthening the Convention by establishing an international regime for monitoring observance of its provisions would be a proper step to stop possible attempts to gain possession of such "weapons of mass destruction for the poor", which would have a destabilizing impact on international security as a whole.

Among the first priorities of the international community in the field of maintaining peace and strengthening stability and security both at the regional and at global levels, is continued attention to the control and reduction of conventional armaments, the huge arsenals of which endanger the very existence of humankind. From this point of view, the decisions taken by the First Review Conference on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) are of great importance, in particular with regard to the need to keep this Treaty in operation as a vital mechanism ensuring arms control, and to adapt it to the new geopolitical situation. That would make it possible to improve the effectiveness of relevant measures and to rely on the Treaty in future arms control negotiations within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the conceptual basis of which is scheduled to be approved prior to the OSCE meeting at Lisbon.

Ukraine welcomes the efforts undertaken by States parties to the CFE Treaty aimed at solving the problems that have arisen in the course of its implementation, in particular the problem of the limitation of arms and equipment in the flank region. However, we feel some concern at efforts aimed at resolving this problem at any cost, even when it involves the security interests of individual States. Ukraine believes that it is absolutely necessary strictly to observe the principle of equal security for all States parties, with due account of the will and sovereignty of individual States on issues relating to the deployment of foreign troops on their territories.

There is one more problem on which I would like to outline the position of Ukraine. It concerns our country's participation in the non-proliferation regimes covering dual-purpose high technologies intended for double purposes. Recent achievements in science and technology play a decisive role in the contemporary development of society.

It is no secret to anyone that the most developed technologies, first of all in the missile and space industry and nuclear energy, as well as achievements in biology and chemistry, are closely linked to the military field, in particular because of the possibility of using them for the development of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, scientific progress can serve as one of the decisive factors in both strengthening and destabilizing international security.

Taking this into account, I would like to underline that the creation of an effective export control system in our country and the establishment of comprehensive cooperation with other States in the field of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of facilities for their supply constitute one of the most important aspects of Ukraine's foreign policy in the field of arms control and disarmament. It is from this perspective that we view our fully fledged participation in such influential international export control regimes as the Nuclear Suppliers' Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement. Ukraine is also striving to participate in multilateral measures in the field of technology non-proliferation. That is why one of our priorities is to secure fully fledged membership in the Missile Technology Control Regime.

At the same time, we believe that any multilateral measures in the field of non-proliferation should neither prevent international cooperation in the development of high technologies nor contradict legitimate self-defence purposes in accordance with the norms of international law.

To better evaluate and forecast the influence of science and technology on international security, we consider it expedient to expand the exchange of experience and information between States in this sphere, while unquestionably preserving the right to the protection of information. In this context, we support the idea of creating a system of criteria for the assessment of technologies.

These are only a few of the important issues which my delegation wanted to raise in the general exchange of views in the First Committee. We are looking forward to elaborating on these and other important problems during the informal discussion which, in the opinion of my delegation, will enhance understanding of our respective positions and thereby help ensure that the work of this Committee is constructive and efficient.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are certain that under your guidance our deliberations will have positive results. Please be assured of the constant cooperation of my delegation towards that end. My delegation also wishes to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Among the striking events of the past year that relate to the work of this Committee, we should underscore, *inter alia*, the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and in South-East Asia — which have joined existing zones in other parts of the world.

My country is a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Antarctic Treaty. We have been committed to the cause of disarmament for many years, and for this reason we attach enormous importance to the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We are convinced that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty marks a significant step in the field of non-proliferation and in the framework of the disarmament process. It is for this reason that Colombia signed it.

Since it is not acceptable for any group of countries to assume a natural and eternal right to posses nuclear weapons, and since we envisage the possibility of a world free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, we invite the nuclear-weapon States to take additional steps and to begin firm negotiations with a view to the elimination of nuclear weapons within an established time-frame. In this respect we completely support what was stated by the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, who met at Cartagena in October 1995. At that meeting they reaffirmed that for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to make sense as a disarmament treaty, it must be considered as an important step towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons by a specific time.

As was affirmed by Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the Non-Aligned Movement at their meeting in New York on 25 September of this year,

> "In the post-cold-war era there is no justification — if ever there was one — to maintain nuclear arsenals, and much less to create new ones, in pursuit of the arms race. The time has come to destroy all reserves of these deadly weapons of mass

> destruction once and for all. The non-proliferation regime will not be successful if there is not a clear prospect for nuclear disarmament."

In this connection the Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation emphasized,

> "once again the need for the Conference on Disarmament to establish on a priority basis an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the elimination of nuclear weapons within an established time-frame."

It is precisely the conviction that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons must be accomplished within a specific time-frame that led us to support the proposed programme of action for nuclear disarmament in accordance with the criteria outlined by the Group of 21 within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

The International Court of Justice made a positive contribution to the cause of peace when it unanimously affirmed the obligation to conduct in good faith and conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control under the terms of Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in its Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996 on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons.

It should be emphasized that in its ruling the Court specifically stated that,

> "The legal import of that obligation goes beyond that of a mere obligation of conduct; the obligation involved here is an obligation to achieve a precise result — nuclear disarmament in all its aspects — by adopting a particular course of conduct, namely, the pursuit of negotiations on the matter in good faith." *(para. 99)*

The Court added that,

> "This twofold obligation to pursue and to conclude negotiations formally concerns the 182 States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or, in other words, the vast majority of the international community." *(para. 100)*

My country has actively participated in the process of strengthening the Treaty of Tlatelolco, a pioneering instrument in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We will continue to support the strengthening of the regime established under that Treaty. It is gratifying to note that the number of States of the region that are parties to the Treaty today has increased to 31.

The Treaty of Pelindaba was signed last April, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa. This instrument and the Treaty signed in December of 1995 establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia, has joined the Antarctic, Tlatelolco, and Rarotonga Treaties in bringing us closer to the establishment of the southern hemisphere as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

My delegation wishes to emphasize that at the Non-Aligned Movement summit last year, the Heads of State or Government encouraged the unification of the nuclear-weapon-free zones already established with those that are now being finalized. In this connection my delegation commends the initiative by Brazil with a view to the consolidation of the southern hemisphere as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

It is disturbing that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction has not entered into force or been ratified this year by those States that have acknowledged themselves to be the largest possessors of these weapons. After two decades of negotiations, and at a time when there is full awareness in the international community of the need for this instrument to enter into force permanently and universally, we cannot fail to call once again upon the States that possess these weapons to ratify the Convention. With 64 out of the 65 ratifications necessary for the Convention's entry into force having been obtained, it is increasingly important that the Convention be ratified as soon as possible by the main possessors of these weapons.

The subject of conventional weapons, and particularly the illicit traffic in those weapons, is among the matters that deserve special attention. My delegation shares the concern about the vast resources that continue to be devoted to the acquisition of weaponry and about the unbridled increase in the illicit traffic in weapons, munitions and explosives. My delegation welcomes the consensus adopted at the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission of the document entitled "Guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 A of 6 December 1991".

Anti-personnel landmines represent a grave threat to the peace, security and safety of millions of persons from all parts of the world. What for a few is one more export item, a mere statistic, is for hundreds of thousands of persons, many of them children, a tangible cause of disability or death. My country resolutely supports the prohibition of the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, and the immediate initiation of negotiations with a view to an international agreement for this purpose.

My delegation supports the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We are convinced that a special session is the appropriate forum to analyze the future course of action in respect of disarmament, arms control and other issues related to international security. We are convinced of the importance of multilateralism in the disarmament process and of the need to insure the full participation of all the members of the international community in the preparation and holding of a fourth special session devoted to disarmament. We are prepared to contribute to reaching the necessary agreements with a view to holding the session before the end of this century. We therefore consider it essential that the preparatory process for the fourth special session start at the beginning of 1997.

Mr. Bergh (South Africa): Please accept my delegations's congratulations, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee of the General Assembly during the fifty-first session. Nineteen ninety-six has been a year in which we have seen many accomplishments in the area of disarmament, but many important and significant tasks remain ahead of us. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you lead the work of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

South Africa remains committed to achieving a world free of all weapons of mass destruction and to addressing the proliferation of conventional weapons. Of major significance during the last year has been the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva; the adoption of the Treaty by the fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly; and the Treaty signing ceremony in New York, which represented the culmination of a long-sought-after goal in nuclear disarmament. The CTBT is a major accomplishment in the field of nuclear disarmament. However, for its implications to be fully realized, the continued commitment of all States — especially the nuclear-weapon States — to nuclear disarmament and to creating a positive climate will be essential.

Our position on the CTBT as an instrument of disarmament and non-proliferation is reinforced by our view that the CTBT is an integral part of a programme of action which will lead to the full implementation of the Article-VI nuclear disarmament obligations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Paragraph 4 of Decision 2 of the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" of Part I of the Final Document of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons identifies the initial elements of such a programme of action for nuclear disarmament. These are: the completion of the negotiations no later than 1996, a goal which has already been accomplished; the immediate commencement and early conclusion of work on a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, the so-called cut-off convention; and the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, and by all States of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The "Principles and objectives" also cover other elements important to the nuclear disarmament agenda, namely the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the need to address the issue of security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT.

In this regard I also wish to recall that in the memorandum of cooperation on disarmament and arms control which was signed between President Nelson Mandela and New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr. James Bolger, on 8 August 1996, it was confirmed that our Governments will work for the commencement next year of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

However, further steps are needed in the programme to bring the world closer to the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. We note that all parties to the NPT have committed themselves to that goal, a commitment which was explicitly recognized in the recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons.

In that context, the process of reviewing the NPT, which will commence next year, provides a means for promoting the full implementation of the Treaty and the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament". However, the agreements which were achieved at the NPT Review and Extension Conference provide for a dynamic process which will add to the programme of action as issues are dealt with and removed from the agenda. For us to achieve this goal of a world free of nuclear weapons we need to demonstrate our sincerity with tangible actions.

This year, 1996, has also seen much work — ranging from the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons to the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons — in defining the path ahead for nuclear disarmament. In this regard, South Africa fully supports the proposal to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, as the venue where much of this work can be focused.

However, care should be taken in our approach to nuclear disarmament so as to maximize the progress which can and must be made. While there might be the temptation to link progress on certain subjects to others, the dire consequence of such a course of action might be to block progress on all fronts.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the world is a clear demonstration of the continued commitment of non-nuclear-weapon States to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. From South Africa's point of view, therefore, one of the most significant events since the last First Committee session has been the signing of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Pelindaba — in Cairo on Il April 1996. We are particularly pleased that four of the nuclear-weapon States signed the Protocol to the Treaty simultaneously with African States at Cairo, while the fifth State has indicated that it will do so in the near future. The signing of the Treaty of Pelindaba is another milestone along this road, as is the conclusion in Bangkok of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, and the signing of the Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga by France, the United Kingdom and the United States.

My delegation believes that the Treaty of Pelindaba reflects the combined ideal of African countries to see our continent free of nuclear weapons, and that it represents an achievement of which we can all rightfully be proud. Following the signing of the Treaty of Pelindaba by the South African Minister for Foreign Affair in Cairo, we are currently in the process of obtaining parliamentary ratification of the Treaty, to be followed by the deposit of our instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity.

It is our conviction that the Treaty of Pelindaba will serve to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and encourage the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world. In this regard, South Africa supports initiatives to promote the southern hemisphere as a zone free from nuclear weapons. With the addition of Antarctica, such a zone will cover more than 50 per cent of the Earth's landmass.

With regard to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, South Africa is pleased with the progress which has been made in the area of ratifications. With 64 States currently having ratified it, and only one more to go before the trigger point for entry into force of the Convention is reached, we are pleased that the efforts of delegations in The Hague will soon be translated into action. It must be mentioned, however, that there are a number of substantive issues still outstanding with regard to the Convention, and South Africa would urge all delegations participating in the discussions in this regard to show the maximum possible flexibility in order to ensure that the second phase of the Convention — entry into force — can proceed with as little disruption as possible.

In addition, South Africa remains convinced that the ratification of the Convention by both the United States and the Russian Federation — as the major declared possessors of chemical weapons — is fundamental to the success of the Convention. Consequently, we urge both these States to finalize their ratification of the Convention at the earliest possible time, particularly in the light of the approaching entry into force.

My Government also reaffirms its commitment to strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction by establishing a verifiable compliance regime for the Convention. It is our hope that the forthcoming Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention will give further impetus to the work of the ad hoc group and encourage it to complete its work as soon as possible in order that it can be presented to a special conference of the States parties to the Biological Weapons

Convention before the next review conference. In the interim, South Africa would encourage all States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to participate in United Nations-administered confidence-building measures.

As a possessor of advanced technology and equipment, South Africa will continue to cooperate in the various international forums dedicated to the non-proliferation of the technologies and equipment which could be used in the development of weapons of mass destruction.

It is not just the threat that is constituted by all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery that is of serious concern to my Government, but also the build-up of conventional weapons beyond a level which can be considered legitimate for the purposes of self-defence. It is thus gratifying that at the 1996 session of the Disarmament Commission, agreement was reached on guidelines for international arms transfers.

Conventional weapons are the source of most of the death and suffering caused in conflicts around the world today, and it is therefore our hope that a greater emphasis will be placed on conventional armaments in all disarmament forums. The rebuilding and prosperity of society which is gained from various peace and democratization initiatives is curtailed by the accompanying proliferation of these arms and light weapons. South Africa would therefore encourage all States Members of the United Nations to support and participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and lend active support to General Assembly resolution 50/70 B on small arms and its panel of governmental experts mandated to assist the Secretary-General to prepare a report on small arms.

South Africa was pleased to host in September 1996 the first regional workshop of the panel of governmental experts on small arms established in pursuance of resolution 50/70 B. We are convinced that such workshops will contribute to a better understanding of the small arms proliferation problem and will assist in finding practical solutions to prevent the excessive accumulation and transfer of light weapons and small arms.

My Government, being a producer of conventional arms and equipment, is concerned at the growing problem of the proliferation of these weapons, especially after the cessation of armed conflicts, as well as in crime related activities. The magnitude of the problem is such, however, that only through appropriate national, regional and international action can the effects of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms be curtailed. What is required is a political commitment from countries to address this issue as a priority. South Africa, for its part, has tightened its arms export control policies and its law which regulates the possession of firearms.

While addressing this issue, I also wish to take up the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel landmines. South Africa has called for the world-wide elimination of anti-personnel landmines. To alleviate the suffering they cause, we are committed to reinforcing international cooperation for mine-clearance and the development of national capacities for mine clearance in mine-infested countries.

Recently, South Africa took part in the international strategy conference on anti-personnel landmines which was held in Ottawa, at the invitation of the Government of Canada, from 3 to 5 October 1996. Having taken part in that Conference, we endorsed the Ottawa Declaration, which commits 48 Governments, including several from Africa, and from the Southern African Development Community region in particular, to work together to ensure the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines. We are also committed to supporting the draft resolution on an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines, which has been circulated for consideration by this Committee.

While the negotiations for an international prohibition on anti-personnel landmines would normally take place in an appropriate existing forum, we would be prepared to consider negotiations in a forum especially set up for this purpose. In taking part in any future negotiations, South Africa would also carefully consider the concerns of those countries which have legitimate difficulties in this regard. Nevertheless, our aim is to broaden the Ottawa group to include as many countries as possible, especially African countries. Our effort to broaden the international consensus on this issue is essential before any new agreement is concluded. In this context it is noteworthy that the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity has already called for a total ban on the manufacture and use of mines.

South Africa further welcomes the successful conclusion of the 1996 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects. The adoption of an amended

Protocol II on landmines, and the addition of the new Additional Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons were major steps forward in the development of the Convention itself, and also of international humanitarian law in general.

Nineteen ninety-six has been a successful year for disarmament and non-proliferation on many fronts. The achievements of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the successful conference on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons; the progress which has been made in increasing the areas of the globe covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones; the work which is being done to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention; and the imminent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention are just examples of the work which has been done since we last met.

However, there is much that still needs to be done to achieve our common goal of the elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction and to end the human tragedy and suffering being caused by the proliferation of conventional weapons. Our work here in the First Committee must therefore be focused on ensuring that we maintain the momentum of our accomplishments.

The Chairman: I will now call on those delegations who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. Before I call upon the first speaker, I remind members of the Committee that in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, the number of interventions in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation, at a given meeting, should be limited to two per item. The first intervention in the exercise of the right of reply should be limited to 10 minutes and the second should be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Kim Cheng Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to speak in exercise of my right of reply to the representative of Japan, and to comment on that representative's statement.

My statement this afternoon was not intended to single out Japan without reason. My statement was based on facts and realities. Japan is increasing defence expenditures every year to suit the economic might of Japan. Now Japan is trying to amend its Constitution to allow it to dispatch its army to other countries. Japan is now trying to justify its arms build-up by citing the situation on the Korean peninsula.

We think it is serious that Japan is trying to justify past crimes. Japan says that it conquered Asian countries to liberate those peoples from Western colonialists. Japan is not going to apologize. In the Japanese Diet they officially reject apologizing to the Asian peoples. Successive Japanese officials have visited the Yasuguni Shrine, where they pay tribute to war criminals.

All this we understand to mean that Japan is trying to realize its ambition to become a military Power in Asia; they will once again make war against Asian nations if the occasion comes.

As for the nuclear issue, Japan is buying large quantities of nuclear materials from European countries. Japan also secretly imports nuclear technology from the United States. Japan boasts of its three non-nuclear principles, but it cannot adopt them as law. So, we really do not know what their intentions truly are. We really do not know how we can trust Japan.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/51/PV.5

General Assembly

Fifty-first session

First Committee

5th Meeting
Wednesday, 16 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Sychou . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka): On behalf of the Sri Lanka delegation and on my own behalf, allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your unanimous election. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation in your fulfilment of the responsibilities entrusted to you as Chairman. I should also like to pay tribute on behalf of my delegation to your distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun, who steered the Committee with great skill during the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Since our gathering last year, many important developments have taken place on the world scene. During this period some long-standing issues of international significance have been resolved. Meanwhile, other political and security issues have emerged, throwing up new challenges at national, regional and global levels. Members of the international community have the responsibility for meeting these new challenges effectively and expeditiously, as only their resolute action will determine the nature of the legacy that future generations will inherit.

The past year has had its own achievements. Significant among them was the completion of negotiations and the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Its path, however, has been tortuous: that fact needs no elaboration. The finale to this process witnessed unprecedented steps being taken in the field of law-making by nations. Leaving a broad margin for the shortcomings of the CTBT with regard to its lack of a clear commitment to nuclear disarmament and to the elimination of all nuclear weapons within a definitive time-frame, as demanded by the Non-Aligned countries, and despite limitations in the scope of the Treaty, we must admit that, with as many as 123 signatures, the collective efforts of the international community since the late 1950s have eventually borne fruit.

Despite the justifiable euphoria, Sri Lanka is concerned that the unconventional stipulation contained in article XIV could delay the entry into force of the Treaty. While we hope that the States parties to the Treaty will find a way to overcome this hurdle in keeping with international law and custom, Sri Lanka hopes that the nuclear-weapon States will abide by the spirit of the Treaty and refrain from conducting underground nuclear-test explosions pending the Treaty's entry into force.

While considering the subject of entry into force of international instruments, we regret the fact that the Chemical Weapons Convention, signed with a fanfare three years ago, is about to enter into force without having been ratified by the two countries possessing the biggest arsenals of chemical weapons on Earth. Sri Lanka expresses the hope that both the Russian Federation and the United States of America will ratify the Convention, and the Preparatory Commission complete its work, as soon as possible.

It has been nearly one and a half years since the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was extended indefinitely. A declaration of Principles and

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Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, known as Decision 2, was adopted by the NPT Review and Extension Conference affirming

> "the need to continue to move with determination towards the full realization and effective implementation of the provisions of the Treaty" *(NPT/CONF.1995/L.5)*

and covering the nuclear spectrum almost in its entirety.

The Preparatory Committee scheduled for spring 1997 will be responsible for assessing, *inter alia*, to what extent and, more importantly, how well the principles and objectives set out in Decision 2 have been honoured by the States parties, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, and what further measures are required to promote the full implementation of the Treaty. A quarter of a century after coming into force, the Treaty still lacks universality. While Sri Lanka calls upon the States that are still outside the Treaty to enter the NPT fold, the States parties also have a responsibility to examine ways and means of attracting these remaining States to the Treaty.

One of the most important objectives of Decision 2 was nuclear disarmament. In this regard it is important to recall the fact that the nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their commitment made in 1968 to pursue in good faith negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament. The time has now come for these States to translate their words into deeds.

Sri Lanka is fully aware of the importance of next year's Preparatory Committee to the NPT Review Conference scheduled for the year 2000. With this in view, my delegation, in its capacity as the country that provided the President of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, intends shortly to convene a meeting of the States parties to the Treaty, with a view to agreeing on a procedural draft resolution to be placed before the current General Assembly calling upon the Secretary-General to provide such assistance as may be required to hold such a Preparatory Committee in 1997.

Because of its importance and timeliness, the subject of nuclear disarmament consumed a considerable amount of the time of the Conference on Disarmament during its 1996 session, in the context of both the CTBT and the Conference agenda. This issue is bound to be taken up in the Conference on Disarmament once again in 1997. Sri Lanka expresses the hope that the First Committee will examine the question in depth and provide guidance on how the Conference on Disarmament should best address this issue in 1997.

In addition to the strong appeal made by the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement at Cartagena, we can also be guided in this regard by the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, delivered in response to the question initiated by the World Health Organization with regard to the legality or otherwise of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

For its part, the Group of 21, which represents nearly half of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament, called early this year for the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Nuclear Disarmament. With the CTBT, which consumed a major part of the Conference's time, behind us, the General Assembly could request the Conference to devote part of its time to this important subject in 1997. Given the successful conclusion of the NPT Review and Extension Conference last year, and the signing of the CTBT this year, Sri Lanka believes that the stage is now set for the next phase of our work: to begin work on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament with the objective of complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. In this regard, Sri Lanka wishes to request all delegations carefully to study the proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons, submitted on 7 August by 28 members of the 61-member Conference on Disarmament.

Security assurances, both negative and positive, by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States have, since the mid-1960s, been a subject of intense debate in the context of the NPT. Regrettably that demand, which could not be resolved in 1968, has failed to be satisfactorily addressed even after 25 years. The intense debate that preceded the Review and Extension Conference, and the views expressed during the Conference by the non-nuclear-weapon States, have made it abundantly clear that Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) failed to address the issue satisfactorily. It was against that background that Decision 2 of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference concluded that

> "further steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons." *(ibid., para. 8)*

While some nuclear-weapon States, such as China and the Russian Federation, are favourably disposed towards an internationally negotiated, legally binding instrument, the other nuclear-weapon States have so far balked at the demand of the non-nuclear-weapon States for such an instrument. However, it has been noted that the nuclear-weapon States have agreed to provide clear-cut security assurances to certain States on a selective basis. While such measures can be welcomed as positive developments, members of the Non-Aligned Movement have concluded that the unilateral declarations and Security Council resolution 984 (1995) constituted only the beginning of a process providing for security assurances to which they, as non-nuclear-weapon States, were entitled. Hence their demand within the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee and elsewhere for an internationally negotiated, legally binding instrument obligating all nuclear-weapon States to provide an uniform guarantee. Sri Lanka hopes that concrete steps will be taken in the Conference on Disarmament in 1997 for negotiating a legally binding international instrument providing security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

It was only during the second half of the twentieth century that human beings were able to escape the gravitational pull of planet Earth and venture into the hitherto unexplored outer space. However, the intense competition and enmity between the two super-Powers at that time almost turned outer space into a futuristic battlefield. Fortunately, that rivalry has now been overtaken by a spirit of cooperation, which we all welcome.

One school of thought advocates the idea that there is no need to continue work to prevent an arms race in outer space in the absence of an arms race in that domain. That there is no arms race in outer space today is an incontrovertible fact. No one, however, would deny the fact that plans to militarize outer space existed not very long ago. It is fortunate that the international climate has changed for the better. What if the situation had worsened? Another school of thought believes that agreeing upon confidence-building measures is all that is needed for the present. We have no difficulties with confidence-building. However, we should ask ourselves whether we should not be a little more ambitious. Could we not use the present positive climate effectively to do all that we can, in case the situation takes a turn for the worse again? If the term "arms race" is irrelevant in today's context, we could agree upon an appropriate term to describe our work, such as the "prevention of the militarization of outer space".

Some delegations were not happy with the proposal to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space in the Conference on Disarmament in 1996, as the Conference had a more important task to perform. As the CTBT is happily behind us now, we should ask the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee in 1997 with a negotiating mandate, so that the Conference can deal with the matter effectively.

I must direct the attention of this Committee to a global problem that stalks practically every State in the world today. It is a vicious circle that has dangerous synergies involving illegal drug peddling, money laundering and illicit arms transfers. These feed international terrorism, which has emerged as public enemy number one — the worst destabilizing factor as this century draws to a close. Massive quantities of conventional weapons released in the wake of the end of the cold war are reaching the illicit arms market and creating serious security problems for States, particularly small and vulnerable ones. My country is one such victim. It must not only meet the military threat of an organization that fattens itself with funds extracted from Sri Lankan asylum-seekers living mainly in Western Europe, North America and several other asylum-granting countries, but also look after the welfare of the tens of thousands of civilians displaced internally as a result of terrorism, at a colossal social and financial burden to the country.

In his address to the General Assembly at its current session, the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka clearly stated that the response to threats of this nature must be global and concerted, as no country acting alone can defend itself against terrorism. Small States such as mine are most vulnerable in this respect. The growing awareness of the problem of terrorism has manifested itself in the recent initiatives taken by the Group of Seven and the Russian Federation at Lyon and at the ministerial meeting on terrorism in Paris. It has become an urgent necessity to forge an international covenant to combat terrorism, which should simultaneously address its relationship to drug peddling, money laundering and illicit arms transfers. There should be thorough observation of and respect for the principle that no territory of a country shall be permitted to be used by terrorist groups to collect funds, purchase weapons and explosives with intent to wage war and carry out subversive propaganda against another country. In an endeavour to combat international terrorism, arrangements must be forged not only globally, but also regionally, subregionally and, where possible, bilaterally.

As I said to the Assembly during my statement last year, the establishment of a Zone of Peace in the Indian Ocean has remained a major objective of our foreign policy. The proposal was first introduced at the United Nations in 1972 by the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike. In the quarter century since the introduction of the proposal, the world has been overtaken by a sea change in inter-State relations. Rivalry between the great Powers and the cold war are things of the past. They have been replaced by a new era of mutual trust, confidence and cooperation, and new frontiers in international relations have been established, which have also generated renewed interest in the Indian Ocean. These include the Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation and the Indian Ocean rim initiative. We must ask ourselves whether we should not make use of the current propitious international climate and forge ahead with arrangements to ensure continued peace and security in this strategically important region.

I wish to refer briefly to the United Nations regional centres for disarmament and peace in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Sri Lanka attaches importance to activities conducted by these regional centres, in its belief that they contribute positively and substantially to the progress of the regions in their respective spheres of human endeavour. Of particular importance is the need to buttress these regional centres financially. Dwindling financial resources prejudice their progress and rob them of their vitality. Sri Lanka, therefore, can only appeal for substantial financial succour to ensure the survival of these centres in this era of disarmament, peacemaking, peace-building and development. Sri Lanka is pleased to note the activities conducted by the Kathmandu Centre and wishes to urge the countries of the region and those outside it to continue their financial assistance to make the Centre a robust one.

With the fundamental changes in the global scene since the beginning of the final decade of the twentieth century, we have to re-examine the validity of the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. The disarmament "Decalogue" is no longer relevant or valid in its entirety. It therefore calls for revision. The Conference on Disarmament's own response to the new challenges has been positive. A Special Coordinator on the Conference's agenda and future programme of work has remained seized of the matter for some time. Although a full consensus could not be reached, there are growing signs of greater understanding on this score. Given the limited resources available to the Conference, we have to be practical enough to avoid biting off more than we can chew. We would do well to identify the issues and prioritize them with a view to doing full justice to a limited number of items within the span of 24 weeks available to us in a given year. It may be prudent for the Conference to consider the desirability of dividing its agenda into two broad areas: nuclear and conventional arms.

The sheer devastation that anti-personnel landmines cause to combatants as well as to non-combatants, both during and after hostilities, and their social and economic consequences have encouraged nations to consider ways and means of controlling such inhumane weapons. If the international community is determined to eliminate this scourge, then it must address all the issues concerned such as the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of such weapons by both State and non-State actors.

Finally, I must stress the importance of the role of non-governmental organizations in the mobilization of public opinion, dissemination of scientific and technical information on disarmament and related issues, which are invaluable to our Committee and the Conference on Disarmament.

We must give all possible support and encouragement to such organizations, both national and international, for they can supplement the many aspects of our work that would otherwise be lost for want of time and financial resources on the part of individual Governments and their representatives.

Mr. Diaz-Pereira (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): May I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Paraguay on your election as Chairman of the First Committee, and ask you also to extend congratulations to the members of the Bureau. Please accept our assurances of full cooperation.

At the start of our Committee's work, we must be aware that we will need a sound dose of judgement and goodwill so that once we have concluded our work, we can see the fruitful results of our efforts to ensure the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and disarmament in general.

We have heard it said that the pace of the process leading to complete nuclear disarmament must be stepped up to match the speed we reached during the arms race. In this regard, my country notes with hopeful optimism that in a very short period of time humankind has taken giant steps toward that goal.

In fact in less than one year, the long and hard road that we have travelled since 1954 has been marked by formidable achievements, among which we may mention, firstly, the conclusion of the Bangkok Treaty and the Cairo

Declaration of 11 April 1996, known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, which formally established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa.

These multilateral instruments are to be added to those already in existence, such as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, to which — following the accession of Guyana on 6 May 1996 — 31 States of Latin America and the Caribbean are party, and the Treaty of Rarotonga, which declares the South Pacific a nuclear-weapon-free zone and whose Protocols have now been signed by the United States of America, France and the United Kingdom.

The adoption by the General Assembly on 10 September this year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was opened for signature on 24 September and has already been signed by the nuclear Powers as well as by the majority of Member States of the United Nations, including Paraguay, is proof of the firm steps taken towards eliminating the terrible threat of the use of nuclear weapons that still looms over the human race.

Another important contribution has been the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice rendered on 8 July this year in response to a request by the United Nations General Assembly. That opinion, the result of an exhaustive and painstaking consideration of the matter, determines that both the threat and use of nuclear weapons would be considered unlawful since they would be in flagrant violation of the provisions of Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter of the United Nations, provided that the conditions for exercising the right of self-defence contained in Article 51 are not met.

Similarly, the members of the Court unanimously expressed the view that the threat or use of nuclear weapons should be compatible with the requirements of the principles and rules of international humanitarian law.

Because of its impeccable legal grounds, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice lays down a doctrine of unquestionable moral force.

The delegation of Paraguay shares the satisfaction at these achievements, which raise our hopes that the coming century will be one of security and peace for all humankind. However, we should point out that they are not an end in themselves but stages on the way to the goal of complete disarmament.

In this connection, we fully share the views of the Canberra Commission, which stated:

> "The proposition that large numbers of nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity and never used, accidentally or by decision, defies credibility ... The only complete defence against such catastrophe is the elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again'. *(Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Report, Part One)*

Given its commitment to this great undertaking of general disarmament, and nuclear disarmament in particular, our country will be one of the sponsors of the draft resolution of Brazil, which declares that the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and the Antarctic are helping gradually to turn the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas into a vast nuclear-weapon-free space.

Furthermore, the draft resolution, to achieve this goal, urges ratification of the instruments mentioned by all States that have not yet done so, as well as the conclusion of identical multilateral treaties in areas of tension such as the Middle East.

However, there are still some outstanding issues, such as accession of major countries to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), whose indefinite extension was decided on in 1995, and the negotiation and conclusion of a universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices.

It is gratifying to note the efforts being made to build a reliable system to guarantee international peace and security which at some time may allow us to divert funds released by the end of the arms race towards activities providing food, better education, better health care and better well-being to millions of human beings who today live in the most abject poverty.

We are fully aware of the value of the work aimed at confidence-building among States. In that regard, we attach great importance to transparency in conventional weapons. That is why we consider that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a valuable mechanism to which our country periodically provides information on its transfers, procurement and stock of military material.

Paraguay is a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and is fully aware of the dangerous effects of their use, as we have seen in recent events. Pending its entry into force, we join those delegations that have voiced their concern and encouraged its prompt ratification by countries that have not yet done so.

We welcomed the amendment to Protocol II on anti-personnel landmines and the adoption of Protocol IV banning the use and transfer of blinding laser weapons, both in the framework of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

Our country applauds those States that produce and export landmines and have called for a voluntary and unilateral moratorium.

With regard to demining, our delegation wishes to pay a tribute of recognition and gratitude to those self-sacrificing men who, endangering their own persons, are today engaged in this very dangerous task somewhere in the world, as well as the States that have been providing the resources needed to clear the landmines.

Despite these important events, the present task will be finished only when a total ban has been agreed on anti-personnel landmines, which cause so much pain and suffering to the civilian population in different parts of the world every day.

In conclusion, may I say that a long road still lies ahead of us and that any effort that the international community may make in the disarmament process in all its all aspects will allow future generations to enjoy the real peace and security so long awaited by humankind.

Mr. Holum (United States of America): The United States congratulates you on your assumption of the Chair, and pledges its cooperation in the important deliberations that lie ahead.

As recent events in this very building have confirmed, this is a time of unprecedented progress for international peace and disarmament. The cornerstone of the world's non-proliferation architecture has been made permanent and strengthened. A global convention to outlaw poison gas is poised to enter into force. We have reversed the nuclear arms race and stepped back from the nuclear precipice. And now we have erected a mighty international barrier against the further development and proliferation of nuclear weapons with an historic treaty to end nuclear explosive testing.

But a vast agenda still lies before us. Its leading elements were outlined here at the United Nations by President Clinton on 24 September 1996 — the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) in force, a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), further controls on nuclear arms, a stronger Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and safeguards, a more enforceable Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and a worldwide ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Today we must address that agenda with particular care. For our great progress in recent years brings not only rewards but responsibilities, including a special responsibility now to seize all that is attainable in our quest for a safer world.

If every avenue ended at a brick wall, our descendants might forgive some measure of carelessness in deciding precisely how to beat our heads against it. But we are in an era of breakthroughs. That means we owe our best and most considered judgements on how to proceed, lest historic opportunities be lost.

So I would like to discuss here today what might seem a bureaucratic issue, but is in fact one that could decide whether disarmament will advance and accelerate, or stall in its tracks. The issue is, what venues — which of our institutions and structures — are best suited for advancing each element of the immense arms control agenda that remains?

The first item on the agenda is unfinished business — to bring the Chemical Weapons Convention into force.

In this case, the proper forum is in individual States and their ratification processes. Of the 65 States necessary to trigger the 180-day countdown toward entry into force, 64 have now deposited instruments of ratification. Regrettably, the United States is not among them. Last month the CWC was withdrawn from consideration in the United States Senate. But every nation here should know that our ratification effort will resume promptly in the next months, without political distractions.

The United States intends to be an original party to this Convention. As President Clinton said:

> "we will join the ranks of nations determined to prevent the spread of chemical weapons." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 2)*

Meanwhile, we are actively destroying United States chemical weapon stockpiles.

The next major achievable step in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is a treaty to ban the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons. As with the test ban, this treaty deferred must not be a treaty denied.

The FMCT must become an urgent priority in the body now seized of it. Indeed, it is a perfect opportunity for the Conference on Disarmament to confirm once again its viability and effectiveness. That body's long experience, substantive expertise, and sound procedures should be put to use, not out to pasture.

Indeed, to negotiate the FMCT now would build on the Conference on Disarmament's achievements in 1992, in the CWC, and also in 1996, in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). For I submit that the Conference on Disarmament did not fail, but succeeded, in the CTBT negotiations. It drew every ounce of consensus available from its 61 members. It brought together all five of the nuclear-weapon States — all the countries most immediately affected by the Treaty — in agreement not only to the principle of a test ban, but on every word of a specific text, which all five have now signed.

The Conference on Disarmament's achievement has been validated by the overwhelming vote in favour of the CTBT at the fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and is being further consolidated by the 125 States that have already signed the Treaty, plus the one — Fiji — that has already deposited its instrument of ratification. The United States will spare no effort in seeking the CTBT's ratification and formal entry into force.

Lest any doubt linger about the Conference on Disarmament's performance, its value can be reconfirmed and underscored by action on the FMCT. A multilateral, effectively verifiable cut-off treaty will complement the CTBT's qualitative cap on nuclear weapons by capping, worldwide, the fissile material available for such weapons. It will cut off the life blood of arms races, old and new. International monitoring will extend to currently unsafeguarded production facilities.

Such a cut-off has been on the global disarmament agenda for many years. India's Prime Minister Nehru, for example, first called for it in 1954. And last year, of course, the NPT Review and Extension Conference called for:

> "The immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations." *(NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), Decision 2, para. 4 (b))*

To fulfil that assignment, the Conference on Disarmament must again break free of artificial linkages that in this case would hold even the beginning of formal FMCT negotiations hostage to other agendas, such as a preordained schedule for eliminating all nuclear weapons.

After our test ban experience, we should not have to belabour the argument that a strategy of linkage is a strategy of failure. Holding a useful, achievable step in abeyance to force pursuit of a far more sweeping and difficult objective is a good way to achieve neither.

The cause of international peace and disarmament and the Conference on Disarmament itself will both be stronger the sooner the Conference on Disarmament turns effectively to the task of elaborating a fissile material cut-off treaty.

To reject linkage, however, is not to deny relevance. The world's nuclear arsenals must keep shrinking. Again, the question is where and how to pursue that end. For the foreseeable future, the best answer is in bilateral negotiations — a judgment that finds support in both the record and nature of our institutions.

In recent years, there has been dramatic progress in nuclear reductions. Cuts under the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) are more than two years ahead of schedule. Both the United States and the Russian Federation have already reduced nuclear-delivery vehicles below the limits set for December 1999. These are real — not pie-in-the-sky — arms reductions: Weapons on the ground are literally being sliced to pieces. Nuclear disarmament, thought to be utopian for so many years, is now being practised in a major way in the real world.

Progress is not confined to the United States and the former Soviet Union. Acting unilaterally, France is in the process of eliminating its land-based nuclear-armed missiles. By the end of 1998, the United Kingdom will have only one nuclear-weapon system and that will carry nearly 60 per cent less explosive power than it did during the 1970s.

We are determined to see the elimination of nuclear weapons continue. President Clinton told the General Assembly last month that

> "When Russia ratifies START II, President Yeltsin and I are all ready to discuss the possibilities of further cuts, as well as limiting and monitoring nuclear warheads and materials. This will help make deep reductions irreversible". (*ibid., p. 2*)

Yet some propose moving strategic arms control efforts to a global forum. One proposal is that the Conference on Disarmament should now undertake negotiations to abolish the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States.

Let me say, as a staunch friend of the Conference on Disarmament, that this would be an inappropriate forum taking up an unamenable subject. It is no act of friendship to elevate expectations for a forum far beyond its capacities. Climbing down from cold-war nuclear-weapon peaks has been an intricate process, involving careful bilateral trade-offs, specialized verification and a constantly shifting menu of sensitive national security calculations. There is simply no realistic prospect that the Conference on Disarmament could manage such an effort. Last year's Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT itself recognized the practical realities. The programme of action declares that the test ban and the fissile cut-off should be completed by the Conference on Disarmament, but it says that efforts to reduce nuclear weapons should be pursued by the nuclear-weapon States. Those are the right assignments.

Is it wrong to be impatient? Absolutely not, for we are working to take down weapons of terrible power and they deserve no indulgence. Is this the business only of the nuclear-weapon States? On the contrary, there is ample room for careful thought and constructive opinion about how disarmament should proceed and abundant opportunity for debate. Indeed, the five nuclear-weapon States have made themselves specifically answerable for their progress in the NPT Review Conferences and will surely be called to account elsewhere. All I ask is that we take great care to nurture our opportunities and grasp them as they arise and that we do not tie ourselves up in a forum that cannot work or a strategy that cannot succeed, but instead keep our eye on the prize and keep advancing steadily towards it.

The next priority President Clinton identified was strengthening the non-proliferation Treaty and its safeguards. In this respect, there is no real dispute about the proper forum, as, under the Treaty, established bodies exist with the requisite competence and motivation. Progress is being made in three vital areas. First, "Programme 93+2" presents a rare opportunity to apply the lessons of Iraq, amplify the lessons of North Korea and give the International Atomic Energy Agency, in President Clinton's words,

> "a stronger role and sharper tools for conducting worldwide inspections" (*ibid., p. 2*)

We urge the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency to approve as soon as possible a protocol to give the Agency greater access to relevant information, sites and technologies, such as environmental sampling, to reinforce its ability to detect undeclared nuclear activities in States under comprehensive safeguards.

Secondly, universal adherence to the NPT is drawing ever closer. There have been 46 new members since the end of the cold war. Only seven countries still remain outside. Thirdly, NPT parties are already preparing for the 2000 NPT Review Conference process, which will begin in 1997 with the first Preparatory Committee meeting. The United States supports implementation of last year's NPT decisions. We are treating the Preparatory Committee meetings as both substantive and procedural and we will be working to ensure that both the Preparatory Committee process and the Treaty review are balanced and treat all aspects of the NPT with equal thoroughness. The Biological Weapons Convention is also being strengthened by its Parties, acting under the aegis of that Treaty.

In September 1994, a Special Conference of the States Parties to the Convention established an Ad Hoc Group, open to all Parties, to address, through a legally binding protocol, the lack of specific compliance measures in the Convention itself. This protocol will enable the Convention to exploit arms control advances, such as short-notice inspections, that have emerged since the Convention was signed in 1972. As the protocol is distinct from the Convention, the Convention's broad prohibitions will remain fully in force for all 139 States Parties, with no weakening of the international norm they represent.

After two years of discussion, the Ad Hoc Group has identified the basic framework for a compliance protocol and has agreed to intensify its work over the next 12 months. Last month, President Clinton called for completion by 1998, a goal shared by the European Union. This effort will succeed if it remains resolutely focused on the task at hand: preventing deadly diseases from being used as instruments of terror or war. We must come to closure on measures to make clear that any would-be proliferator's actions will not go unnoticed or unanswered by the international community.

The international community will soon decide how to continue our ambitious strides to control and then eliminate the use of anti-personnel landmines. We classify as "weapons of mass destruction" weapons that can destroy whole cities. Landmines are routinely destroying the equivalent of whole cities, one person at a time, day in and day out. Years after a conflict is over, they lie in wait to kill and maim innocent civilians. A major step forward has been made in the past year with agreement being reached on an amended Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions of Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects to ban non-detectable and unmarked long-lived anti-personnel landmines. It will avert thousands of deaths and disabilities every year. We urge all countries to adhere to amended Protocol II.

Now our task is to negotiate as soon as possible a global ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. We are looking at a number of possible paths to such a treaty including — as the Secretary of State, Mr. Christopher, has said — the Conference on Disarmament. There are other possible venues and we are continuing to consult on this issue.

Whatever route is chosen, the United States is committed to a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. As we pursue it, we are also working hard to find alternatives for the circumstances in which such mines remain a military necessity so that we can end our reliance on them as soon as possible. That is a technical and economic challenge, but the human carnage wreaked by landmines every single day also makes it essential. As President Clinton said last month:

> "Our children deserve to walk the Earth in safety". (*ibid., p. 3*)

The United Nations has entered the second half-century of its work for disarmament, international security and peace, and it has become clear that our efforts in this half-century must be guided by the arc of our progress in the previous one. Look at the remarkable strides we have taken. A few short years ago the growth of nuclear arsenals seemed inexorable. Today, arsenals in the United States, Russia, France and the United Kingdom are shrinking. In previous decades, we seemed powerless to oppose those who would use poison gas or deadly organisms in war or acts of terror. Now, we are closing in on entry into force of a treaty banning chemical weapons and are giving teeth to one that bans biological weapons. A world that witnessed more than 2,000 nuclear explosions has brought an end to that era.

All this progress is far more than a prelude to the real work of disarmament — it is the real work of disarmament, as we dismantle weapons and lifts our sights to the next steps that we can take. Each of these steps, each of these strides, and others, were made by aiming not for chasm-spanning leaps, but for concrete, achievable steps, first to stem the tide, and then to turn it.

It may be tempting to think that all this has resulted from leverage; but disarmament does not occur on demand. Security, not leverage, yields progress. We should recall that some were wary of extending the NPT indefinitely because they thought that the nuclear-weapon States would afterwards lose interest in the test ban. Instead, we intensified our efforts. That happened because in arms control each forward step creates a new security reality, thereby changing security thinking and generating possibilities that were unimaginable before. The Chemical Weapons Convention, a permanent and stronger NPT, the intermediate-range nuclear force and START reductions, and the CTBT all combine to yield a clearer picture of a secure future in which further steps can confidently be pursued. At each step up the ladder we can see better and further, and so do more.

Last month, President Clinton declared at the General Assembly that the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty

> "points us towards a century in which the roles and risks of nuclear weapons can be further reduced and ultimately eliminated" (*ibid., p. 1*)

Now we will decide, through the fateful choices we make on how to proceed, whether we will sustain our momentum or squander it. If we choose badly, we risk not only tomorrow's progress, but today's, for, as historian Edward Gibbon said,

> "All that is human must retrograde if it does not advance".

If we choose wisely and well, however, our next half-century of progress can be even greater than the last and future generations will celebrate towering victories in the cause of security, disarmament and peace.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Algeria is delighted to see you, Sir, presiding over the work of the First Committee. This enlightened choice of the General Assembly attests to the international community's recognition of the constructive role played by your country in all matters related to disarmament. It is also a tribute to your professional and personal qualifications. In warmly congratulating you and other members of the Bureau, I should also like to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, for his brilliant stewardship of the work of this Committee.

The changes that have affected the system of international relations in recent years offer a new framework for reflecting on how to strengthen, on a lasting basis, security and cooperation in the world through the development of a new model of international relations.

Indeed, the retreat of the logic of confrontation has opened the way for a form of international cooperation that has made it possible to achieve positive results in matters of disarmament. Given the magnitude of the efforts required to overcome political resistance, the achievements in this area are remarkable. The relaxation of tensions and the reduction of the threat to peace that followed can only be a source of satisfaction, even though the peace dividend does not benefit all people equally.

The annual debate in the First Committee on disarmament and international security issues has, over the years, become a reliable barometer of the international political climate and serves as a valuable indicator of future prospects, inasmuch as disarmament lies at the heart of problems of peace and international security. Strong in this conviction, Algeria has demonstrated its firm commitment to strengthening the process of general and complete disarmament through various initiatives, including its active participation in the elaboration of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, its accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), its signing on 30 April 1996 of a general safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and its ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

The fact that the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its first session on 24 January 1946 was aimed at eliminating atomic weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction from national arsenals is more than merely symbolic. Since that time, the definitive cessation of all nuclear-weapons tests in all environments and the renunciation of the development of new weapons systems have become objectives whose implementation is now within the reach of the international community. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which my country has signed, emerged from this willingness of States to put an end to the nuclear-arms race and to continue the process of nuclear disarmament.

Algeria, which made a responsible and constructive contribution to the elaboration of this Treaty, believes that it is a first stage in the opening of substantive negotiations on a process of nuclear disarmament that is global in scope and non-discriminatory in its effects. That is why my delegation calls for the need to examine in depth, at this session, the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons presented by the Group of 21 to the Conference on Disarmament. In that context, we believe that the cessation of the manufacture of fissile materials should be combined with the ban on nuclear-weapons tests and related measures to make the disarmament process genuine and to speed effective progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Today, the international community is more united than ever in its recognition of the fact that the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons is an objective of paramount importance. Its unanimity was reflected in the Advisory Opinion on the legality of the use or threat of nuclear weapons issued by the International Court of Justice, to which I would like to pay tribute for its breakthrough in setting standards for disarmament.

Through the responsible approach that has always been its hallmark, Algeria contributed to the efforts of African leaders that resulted in the adoption on 30 April of the Treaty of Pelindaba, through which the States members of the Organization of African Unity made Africa a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. This process should be encouraged and accompanied by similar efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, *inter alia*, in the Middle East, where Israel's nuclear potential poses grave threats to the peace and security of that region.

The Chemical Weapons Convention to which my country became the thirty-third State Party in August 1995, is assuredly an authentic and universal disarmament instrument. Nevertheless, its forthcoming entry into force without the United States and the Russian Federation will not only detract from the idea of the universality of this treaty, but worse still will weaken it considerably. This situation has led a number of delegations, including my own, to express concern over the future of the Convention and the practical and political consequences arising from the non-accession of the United States and the Russian Federation.

Given the conviction that international security must be to everyone's benefit, it is only natural that the largest possible number of people will strive to establish the conditions for and lay the foundations of such security. The expansion of United Nations bodies with limited memberships, such as the Conference on Disarmament, is a common-sense necessity arising from the end of hostilities and the prevalence of decision-making by consensus and must take into account concerns for efficiency by adhering to reasonable size limits. My delegation has always supported the idea of expansion and welcomed the decision to open that body to 23 new member States last June. We hope that this will lead to an awareness of the need to revitalize that multilateral disarmament negotiating framework and we reiterate our attachment to the role, mandate and rules of that body.

On the subject of the Mediterranean, Algeria is resolved to work towards partnership and joint responsibility in the security and development of the Mediterranean region that will incorporate the requirements of peace and cooperation between the two North and South shores and make the region one of complementarity and prosperity, free from tension.

It was in this spirit that Algeria acceded to the Barcelona process, which in our view represents an important stage towards the advent of relations between Europe and the Mediterranean sustained by joint action aimed at making regional security and development indivisible. The draft resolution on the Mediterranean that is before this Committee will be drafted in that spirit and aim for the same objectives.

The initiatives of the non-aligned States within the Conference on Disarmament are aimed at developing and supporting the impetus of disarmament. This impetus, whose purpose is to embrace all the interrelated objectives of disarmament under the banner of effective security, should encompass a question that is of particular concern to a growing number of States: the illicit transfer of conventional weapons, which breeds and exacerbates such violent phenomena as terrorism. This issue, which my delegation considers to be neither minor nor secondary to the security and stability of many countries, requires the special attention of the international community and should be addressed effectively and urgently.

We are facing new challenges that call for timely responses. These challenges cannot be met with selective and partial responses. They should locate human beings at the centre of all common concerns so that every player in the international arena is made aware of the need for security that is global in nature, universal in scope and non-discriminatory in its effects and blessings.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.